



IRON MAIDEN

CAN YOU FIND EDDIE? SEE P.80

VILLE VALO

SEX SHOPS! VAMPIRES! SHEEP?! |

OBITUARY

RESCUING CATS IS (DEATH) METAL

HAMMER

**THE GIGS THAT
CHANGED METAL**

BY THE PEOPLE
WHO WERE THERE

SABBATH!
METALLICA!
SLIPKNOT!

NIGHTWISH

- AND THE UNSTOPPABLE FLOOR JANSSEN -

DANNY ELFMAN

NIGHTMARE..., WEDNESDAY,
AND THAT COACHELLA SHOW

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

WHY METAL'S LOVE
AFFAIR ENDURES

+

BAD OMENS • NAPALM DEATH • VOLBEAT • PUPIL SLICER
CASSYETTE • DREAM EVIL • EMPLOYED TO SERVE • IN FLAMES

+

TUOMAS
ranks every
Nightwish album!

**BEYOND
THE BLACK**
Meet the next stars
of symphonic!



IRON MAIDEN

SALUTING THE UK ROCK LEGENDS
AND THEIR ICONIC MASCOT EDDIE





Royal Mail



To see the full **Iron Maiden** stamp collection,
visit **royalmail.com/ironmaiden**

7-10 JUNE 2023 GDAŃSK, SHIPYARD

MYSTIC FESTIVAL 2023

GOJIRA SUIZIDA DANZIG

PERFORMING „DANZIG” IN ITS ENTIRETY

Electric
Wizard

MESHUGGAH

behemoth

THE
HELLCOPTERS

TESTAMENT

WATAIN / MOONSPELL / PERTURBATOR / EXODUS / DISMEMBER / VOIVOD / ALCEST
SLEEP TOKEN / UNLEASHED / CARPATHIAN FOREST / GRAVE / SOEN / SPIRITBOX / IMMINENCE
PHILL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS / GODFLESH / PRIMITIVE MAN / EARTHLESS / LUCIFER
“MOTORHEAD SET”
GREG PUCIATO / WOLFHEART / NOTHING MORE / VENDE / LORD OF THE LOST / HORSKH / HERIOT
SYLVAIN / EMPLOYED TO SERVE / LOST SOCIETY / PLANET OF ZEUS / BLACK MIRRORS / ANTIMATTER
DARKHER / MOLYBARON / BOMBUS / NE OBLIVISCARIS AND MORE

4 DAYS, 5 STAGES, OVER 90 BANDS

MORE HEADLINERS: BEER: FROM 3 EURO / DINNER: FROM 4 EURO, INCL. WIDE SELECTION OF VEGE AND VEGAN OPTIONS / BEAUTIFUL, HISTORIC CITY OF GDAŃSK LOCATED BY THE
BALTIC SEASIDE / 10 MIN WALKING DISTANCE FROM THE FESTIVAL SITE TO DOWNTOWN / 15 MIN. TO THE BEACH / DOWNTOWN HOTEL PRICE: FROM 50 EURO PER DAY / DIRECT
FLIGHT CONNECTIONS FROM ALMOST ALL EUROPEAN CAPITAL CITIES.



WWW.MYSTICFESTIVAL.COM

ANTYRADIO

Editorial

Editor **Eleanor Goodman**
 eleanor.goodman@futurenet.com
 Production Editor **Vanessa Thorpe**
 vanessa.thorpe@futurenet.com
 Reviews Editor **Jonathan Selzer**
 jonathan.selzer@futurenet.com
 Art Editor **Louise Brock**
 louise.brock@futurenet.com
 Associate Editor **Dave Everley**
 dave.everley@futurenet.com
 Staff Writer **Rich Hobson**
 rich.hobson@futurenet.com
 Content Director – Music **Scott Rowley**

Contributors

Steve Appleford, Robert Arellano, Oliver Badin, Adam Brennan, Richard Chamberlain, Chris Chantler, Alec Chillingworth, Joe Daly, Hywel Davies, Remfry Dedman, Alex Deller, Jerry Ewing, Paris Fawcett, Spencer Grady, Stephen Hill, Emma Johnston, Tyler Damara Kelly, Hannah May Kilroy, Dom Lawson, Elliot Leaver, Danni Leivers, Dave Ling, Clay Marshall, Will Marshall, Sophie Maughan, Edwin McFee, Joel McIver, Matt Mills, Morat, Catherine Morris, Tom O'Boyle, Alastair Riddell, Liz Scarlett, Rosie Esther Solomon, Kevin Stewart-Panko, Paul Travers, James Weaver, Christina Wenig, Kez Whelan, Jon Whitehorn, Holly Wright, Nik Young

Cover Photography: Tim Tronckoe

Cover Manipulation: Gary Stuckey

Photography

Justin Borucki, Derek Bremner, Steve Bright, Janson Bulpin, Stephanie Cabral, Duncan Everson, Nick Fancher, Andy Ford, Alicia Hauff, Mick Hutson, Will Ireland, Simon Kallas, George Chin, Tina Korhonen, Marie Korner, Dave LePage, John McMurtrie, Kevin Nixon, Katja Ogrin, Jake Owens, Emma Painter, Tom Russell, Jeremy Saffer, Anthony Scanga, Ester Segarra, James Sharrock, Travis Shinn, Phil Wallis, Frank White, Jonathan Weiner, Dani Willgress, Neil Zlozower
 All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

Advertising

Media packs are available on request
 Advertising Sales Director **Lara Jaggon** - lara.jaggon@futurenet.com
 Account Director **Steven Pyatt** - steven.pyatt@futurenet.com

International Licensing & Syndication

Metal Hammer is available for licensing and syndication. To find out more contact us at licensing@futurenet.com or view our available content at www.futurecontenthub.com.
 Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw** - licensing@futurenet.com

Subscriptions

Email enquiries **help@magazinesdirect.com**
 UK orderline & enquiries **0330 333 1113**
 Overseas order line and enquiries **+44 330 333 1113**
 Online orders & enquiries **www.magazinesdirect.com**
 Head of subscriptions **Sharon Todd**

Subscription delays

We rely on various delivery companies to get Hammer to you, many of whom continue to be impacted by Covid. We kindly ask that you allow up to seven days before contacting us about a late delivery to **help@magazinesdirect.com**

Circulation

Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production

Group Head of Production **Mark Constance**
 Production Manager **Keely Miller**
 Senior Ad Production Manager **Jo Crosby**
 Ad Production Coordinator **Emma Thomas**
 Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
 Production Manager **Keely Miller**

Management

Managing Director – Music **Stuart Williams**
 Head of Design (London) **Brad Merrett**
 Chairman **Richard Huntingford**

Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
 www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9060

ISSN 0955-1190

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards. All contents © 2023 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein. If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

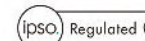
Metal Hammer (ISSN 0955-1190) March, Issue 371, is published monthly with an extra issue in April by Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK

The US annual subscription price is \$194.87 Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc, c/o BBT 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA

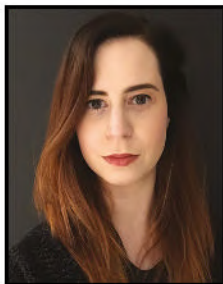
Application to Mail at Periodicals Postage Prices is Pending at Brooklyn NY 11256.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Metal Hammer, World Container Inc, c/o BBT 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA

Subscription records are maintained at Future Publishing, c/o Air Business Subscriptions, Rockwood House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH, UK



Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
 www.futureplc.com
 Chief Executive **Zillah Byng-Thorne**
 Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
 Chief Financial and Strategy Officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**
 Tel: +44 (0)1225 442 244



FLOOR JANSEN IS UNSTOPPABLE

DURING HER 10 years and counting as the singer of Nightwish, Floor's taken the band to new heights and become a firm favourite with fans, so there was an outpouring of concern when she was diagnosed with breast cancer last October. Thankfully, she's since had successful surgery. But, as she tells Polly Glass on p.36, strength doesn't necessarily mean having a commanding stage presence, or enduring medical treatment – it comes from being a whole, vulnerable person. That's a message she's also carrying into her forthcoming debut solo album, *Paragon*. We could all do with being A Bit More Floor.

But, don't worry! We haven't forgotten Nightwish founder/visionary/moustache enthusiast Tuomas Holopainen! As he thinks of the band's albums as his children, we asked him to rank them from best to worst, because we're mean like that. Who's his favourite child? Turn to p.44 to find out.

On *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*, Nightwish wrote about evolution. And while heavy music's history might span decades rather than millennia, we've uncovered the 10 gigs that changed the sound of metal forever (p.54). From Sabbath to Slipknot, it's a reminder of how awesome our world is.

Stay metal,



ELEANOR GOODMAN
 EDITOR
 @ELEANORGODMAN

MEET THE BAND



POLLY GLASS
 WRITER

Polly is Deputy Editor over at our sister mag, *Classic Rock*, and interviewed Nightwish for this month's cover. When she's not listening to AC/DC, Led Zep and the like, you can find her writing fiction, baking cookies and watching documentaries about serial killers.



CHRIS CHANTLER
 WRITER

Chris is our go-to man for anything related to swords and sorcery, so he was the natural choice to explore metal's love affair with *Dungeons & Dragons* (turn to p.62). So, can you teach us how to defeat our enemies, please, Chris?



KEVIN NIXON
 PHOTOGRAPHER

Kev has been shooting for *Hammer* for years – maybe even centuries. This month he shot underground legends Anaal Nathrakh and Sigh (see p.104). He's currently working on a project about cathedrals, which is well goth if you ask us.

FOLLOW US



METALHAMMER.COM



/METALHAMMER



@METALHAMMER



@METALHAMMERUK



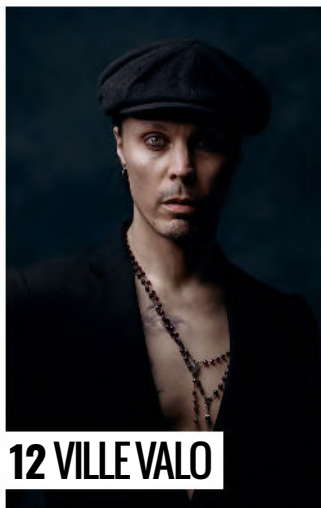
METALHAMMERTV



SCAN TO GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER



36 NIGHTWISH



12 VILLE VALO



17 PUPIL SLICER

CONT

FRONT ROW

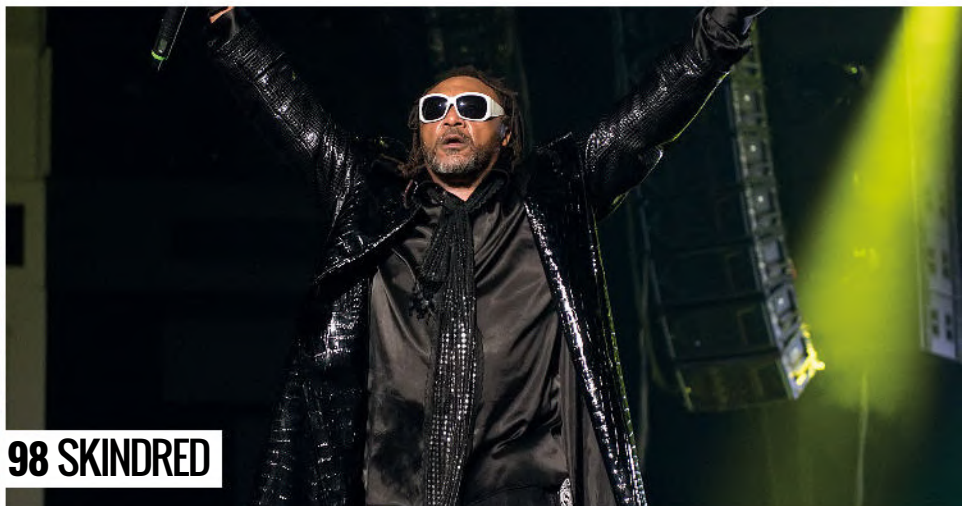
- 10 They're not just a death metal band – **OBITUARY** also help cats!
- 12 We couldn't resist getting **VILLE VALO** back! He answers your burning, burning questions.
- 16 What's on **CASSYETTE**'s Slaylist? Some bangers, that's what.
- 17 In the studio with UK mathcore gang **PUPIL SLICER**.
- 18 Get your life lessons from **NAPALM DEATH**'s Shane Embury.
- 22 The story behind **DREAM EVIL**'s *The Book Of Heavy Metal*. Arrrrgh!
- 28 Why **HOLY FAWN** are taking heavy music in divine new directions.

FEATURES

- 36 After a tough few years, **NIGHTWISH**'s **FLOOR JANSEN** is beginning a brand new chapter.
- 44 And we couldn't forget **TUOMAS HOLOPAINEN**! He ranks every **NIGHTWISH** album.
- 50 The next stars of symphonic metal? It might just be **BEYOND THE BLACK**.
- 54 From Sabbath inventing a genre to Metallica working with an actual orchestra, these are **THE GIGS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD**.
- 62 We investigate metal's love affair with **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**.



68 DANNY ELFMAN



98 SKINDRED



50 BEYOND THE BLACK


54 THE GIGS THAT
CHANGED HISTORY

ENTS

**SUBSCRIBE
NOW & SAVE**

Head to p.34
for details

68 Legendary Hollywood composer **DANNY ELFMAN** gets The Hammer Interview treatment.

74 Thanks to the influence of pop (yes really), metalcore's **BAD OMENS** are heading for stardom.

ALBUM REVIEWS

88 Melodeath pioneers **IN FLAMES** return to their creative source.

90 Sweden's eclectic lunatics **AVATAR** get their dancing shoes on.

92 Iconoclasts **CODE ORANGE** put themselves through the mixer.

93 Symphonic sensations **DELAIN** resurrect themselves.

96 Eurovision vamps **MÅNESKIN** leap overboard.

LIVE REVIEWS

98 Danish rockers **VOLBEAT** find the antidote to conservatism.

100 **BLEED FROM WITHIN** reaffirm their metalcore credentials.

101 **ORANGE GOBLIN** stage a coup in Camden.

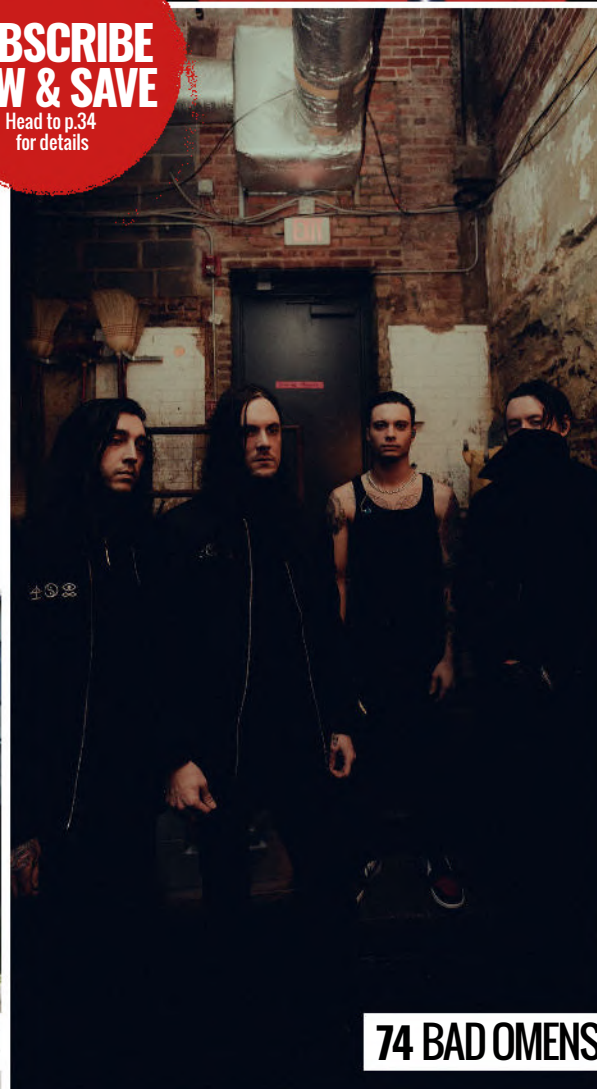
102 **CLUTCH** bring their idiosyncratic exaltations to Bristol.

103 **ALTER BRIDGE** and friends storm the 02.

104 **ANAAL NATHRAKH** and **SIGH** offer the epitome of extremity.



88 IN FLAMES



74 BAD OMENS



THE BIG PICTURE

TILL THE END

IN EARLY 2015, Motörhead went into Hollywood's NRG Studios to record their 22nd album, *Bad Magic*. It would be their last. Frontman and founder Lemmy passed away on December 28 that same year, just four days after his 70th birthday. But, in true Motörhead fashion, their final year was spent in much the same way as the previous four decades – by being louder and more rock'n'roll than everybody else.

Now, fans can hear two previously unreleased tracks from these sessions, *Bullet In Your Brain* and *Greedy Bastards* – some of the final recordings Lemmy ever made – on reissue *Seriously Bad*

Magic, out on February 24. The release also includes a live performance from that year's Mt Fuji Rock Festival, an audio interview with Lemmy from back then and, somewhat bizarrely, a Motörhead-themed ouija board.

Bad Magic saw the band undertake a typically vigorous stint of touring, including an appearance at Glastonbury Festival. The band's final UK show was at the Eden Project, a massive collection of botanical gardens in Cornwall – a risky move considering Lemmy's claim in the band's early days that “if Motörhead moved in next door, your lawn would die”. **H**





THE HOT TOPIC

MEET THE METAL MEOWLISHA

The cat charity run by Obituary's Donald Tardy will give you fuzzy feelings about fuzzy felines

WORDS: MATT MILLS

BETWEEN CANNIBAL CORPSE frontman George 'Corpsegrinder' Fisher's obsession with winning plush toys in claw machines and donating them to charity, and Gojira's environmental campaigns, death metal has a weird habit of producing extreme music's loveliest people. Now we can add Obituary drummer Donald Tardy to those ranks. Although his day job involves smacking a kit with the sound of blaring guitars and big brother John's growls in his ears, he moonlights as the co-leader of Metal Meowlisha, a charity that looks after stray cats in his hometown of Tampa, Florida.

Donald created the charity in 2004 with his wife, Heather, and it operates on a "trap - neuter - return" (TNR) model, which means they care for feral felines while preventing them from having kittens.

"There are colonies of cats all over, hiding behind bowling alleys and

"I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT WE ADOPTED A SKUNK"

DONALD TARDY

apartment complexes, by McDonald's and Taco Bells," the death metal veteran explains via a video call. "So, we get the kittens and any feral adults out of there, and then they get their vaccinations and get fixed. They get to live out their lives, but they don't keep reproducing, which helps stop the overpopulation problem."

Tampa's home to a ton of strays. Metal Meowlisha only covers the 1sq km surrounding Donald's house, yet it looks after more than 30 colonies and 130 animals. The drummer noticed the abundance of unowned cats in Tampa in the early 80s, when his family moved there from Miami.

"We've always been an animal family," he says. "Since I can remember, we always had dogs, cats, birds and hamsters. My brother has snakes."

John shouts from somewhere off-screen: "Got two of those!"

Donald laughs. "I don't know how, but we adopted a skunk," he remembers. "He was a mean son of a bitch. He was nocturnal, so, when we went to bed, all we heard was him in the closet or under our beds. What do you do? You grab all the couch pillows and pile them in your bed so, when he wakes you up, you can



Obituary: friends of furballs

throw them to get him out of the room. Ha ha ha!"

Donald currently has a pet cat called Yimmy. He remains the sole exception Metal Meowlisha has ever made to its TNR approach to animal care. "He's just about to turn 17 years old," Donald says, "so he's an old guy now, but he is my best bud when I'm home. He doesn't ask for much. He's just a sweet boy."

Donald and Yimmy have been besties for most of the cat's life. When they first met, Yimmy was "very young" - and one of his eyes was hanging out. One rush to the vet later, Donald discovered it was a miracle that Yimmy was still drawing breath at all.

"He was shot with a BB gun," he remembers, surprisingly calmly and matter-of-factly. "When they laid him out on the table and gave him anaesthesia, they realised that he had 11 bullets in him, all throughout his body. Someone was shooting that poor kitten again and again, and somehow he survived. If that person that shot him that many times saw how sweet a cat Yimmy is, they probably never



would have. But, then again, evil people do horrible things to animals.”

The Tardys’ love for the animal kingdom and the natural world also manifests on Obituary’s new album, *Dying Of Everything*. The title sounds prophetic, considering it was written before the pandemic, but the lyrics lament the ways humanity is fucking up the planet – from waging wars to exacerbating climate change.

“We all love the outdoors,” John explains, as he sits down beside his brother. “We love being outside and living in Florida, all the fishing and camping. Every year, you see more of that being taken away from you. The more everybody can do just a little bit, the better everybody is, even if it’s something as simple as recycling.”

“So many people are so lazy,” Donald adds. “They just throw trash out the window or as far away as they can: that ‘the further you throw it, the less you think about it’ mentality.”

However – and despite John howling lyrics such as ‘Perish to the ground, cometh living hell’ on lead single *The Wrong Time* – Obituary refuse to lose hope. On a personal level, Donald declares with a loud laugh that he wants *Dying Of Everything* to go platinum.

“What’s that, about a hundred records now?” he grins. And, he doesn’t think the world’s completely doomed, just that people need to start taking the threats to it seriously.

“Things only get overwhelming if you let them,” John offers. “I think, if everybody takes care of the little things first, then maybe some of the big things will follow.” ■

TO FIND OUT MORE, HEAD TO [OBITUARY.CC/HELPCATS.HTML](https://obituary.cc/helpcats.html)
DYING OF EVERYTHING IS OUT NOW.
OBITUARY PLAY LONDON’S ELECTRIC BALLROOM ON FEBRUARY 23



10 THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH

What’s been blowing our tiny brains

GHOST’S CALL ME LITTLE SUNSHINE WAS THE BEST SONG OF 2022...

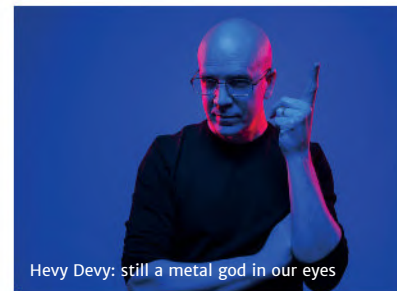
According to *Hammer* readers anyway, in a massive vote that got more than 132,000 entries.

...AND SLIPKNOT’S THE END, SO FAR WASN’T AS DIVISIVE AS WE THOUGHT

Internet opinion might have been divided, but Slipknot’s latest took the top spot on the *Hammer* readers’ poll for best album of 2022.

PUSCIFIER ARE COMING BACK

Maynard James Keenan’s project have announced their first UK/Euro shows in seven years. Colour us excited!



Hevy Devy: still a metal god in our eyes

DEVIN TOWNSEND WAS OFFERED ROB HALFORD’S JOB

Well, almost. He was invited to try out for Judas Priest when Rob left in the 90s, but didn’t think he’d be good enough.

SLEEP TOKEN HAVE AN ALBUM ON THE WAY

Initial singles suggest it’s just as experimental as we’d hope. Bring it.

WE MIGHT BE GETTING A PICK OF DESTINY SEQUEL

And possibly a sequel to *School Of Rock*, according to a new Tenacious D interview.

TILL LINDEMANN HAS A STATUE

Well, had. Unveiled for the Rammstein frontman’s 60th birthday, it was promptly stolen that same day. Uh-oh.

SID WILSON AND KELLY OSBOURNE HAVE HAD A BABY!

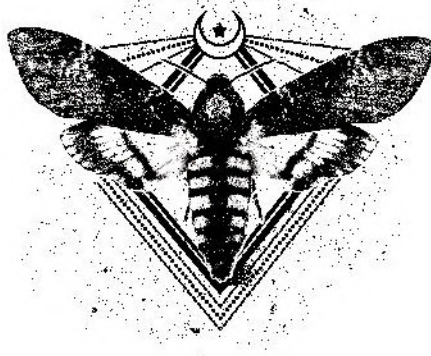
That’s one hell of a metal family. Welcome to the world, baby Sidney!

JOHN DOLMAYAN WISHES SOAD HAD BOOTED OUT SERJ TANKIAN

The drummer says they should have replaced Serj back in 2006. A new year, the same old System Of A Down drama.

SLIPKNOT’S ‘LOST ALBUM’ MIGHT EMERGE THIS YEAR

Clown says they may drop *Look Outside Your Window* soon. It was recorded during 2008’s *All Hope Is Gone* sessions.



WHEN WERE YOU FIRST BURIED ALIVE BY LOVE?

Ex-Him frontman and newly minted solo artist Ville Valo answers your questions on love, pornography and... sheep

WORDS: CATHERINE MORRIS

AFTER HIS SO-CALLED “Schlager years” with fellow countrymen Agents post-Him, the lovelorn dark prince Ville Valo has returned to the heavy side with his new solo record, *Neon Noir*. Talking to *Hammer* from his home studio, he’s as grandiloquent as ever, but with a twisted humour – one minute he spouts the kind of ornate turns of phrase you’d expect from a man with the eyes of Edgar Allan Poe tattooed on his back, the next he’s giggling like a teenager over a double entendre. There were many declarations of love for metal’s biggest romantic to sift through, so we put your burning questions to the man himself to answer with his signature wit and a wicked gleam in his eye.

Would you rather be a ghost or a vampire?

Michal Edwards, email

“Who wouldn’t want to be a vampire for a day? Sucking some blood, having cool clothes... I do own a cape already, so I’m kind of halfway there. The only thing I’m missing is the unquenchable thirst for blood. And I have the accent as well – the hard R. I think I have a bright future as a vampire.”

How old were you when you were first buried alive by love?

FuzzyPenguin23, Twitter

“Love is the gift that keeps on giving, so I tend to travel with a shovel. I think you keep on learning new things about it the older you get.

The first time was probably when I was 14, 15, those infatuated moments. I’m a bit of a drama king – or queen, or something in between – so I have a tendency to overreact to things. Not only the matters of the heart. Being buried alive by love was a favourite pastime; I’m writing the book on it.”

We know you read a lot of books – have you ever considered becoming an author?

Constance S Autrice, Facebook

“I do appreciate the talents of people like Nick Cave, who’s such a verbal acrobat and has been able to create such a unique world with his own lexicon. Mark Lanegan did that for a wee bit – rest in peace, Mark. His was the last biography that I’ve read in many moons. But I hide behind music, the distorted guitars and wall of sound. Picking up the quill and doing a couple of lines for a song is already a struggle, so a full-fledged book is not for me. Not now, at least. Maybe I should start doing speed. I’ve heard that helps.”

Is there any instrument that you would like to use in your music that you can’t because you don’t know how to play it, or it doesn’t fit with the style of music?

Hayley Jane Hayward, Facebook

“[Snickering] Was that a sexual question, Hayley?”

***Hammer*: Not that instrument.**

“I still don’t really know how to play any instrument that well. But I know

what I’m looking for in a song, so I try to make that happen by force. It’s not necessarily the most elegant way of doing it, but it gets the job done. That’s the way I approached the new album. I’d love to play the church organ. I’ve heard it’s pretty amazing because it makes your whole body rattle, but my tinnitus probably couldn’t take it. It’s such a different discipline, playing classical instruments, to pop and rock. Spending your days amongst dead white men from the 1500s isn’t really my idea of fun. That’s why I decided to hang out with the Brummies of the 1970s – spiritually speaking.”

If you could collaborate with any musician who has inspired you over the years, who would it be?

Rachel McLachlan, Facebook

“I think the best things happen by accident. It’d be great to sing a duet with Debbie Harry or Annie Lennox. I’m a huge fan. And of course, Kate Bush. Or Cyndi Lauper – I have her autograph! We had the same technician once on tour; I asked him for an autograph from her and then she asked for one from me. I had a passport that had just gone out of date so I ripped out the first page of my passport and signed that for her. That was pretty special. Those characters are very important. Like Grace Jones, she’s a powerhouse. Those grand dames of drama. I love powerful women. Who doesn’t? ...I’ve started waxing nostalgic.”

Count Ville doesn't want
to suck your blood, but
he's working on it

**“DEAD WHITE MEN
FROM THE 1500s AREN'T
MY IDEA OF FUN”**

What happened to your dad's sex shop?

Toby Jason, email

"It's still going strong! It's like the movie *Smoke* with Harvey Keitel, about a smoke shop owner. It's not so much about the latest gadgets to enjoy yourself or spice up your sex life with as it is the community, meeting the locals and hanging out. It's in a cool, vibrant part of the city, and my dad has a lot of visitors – not only the Him posse but people who travel from as far away as Argentina or Vladivostok. He's enjoying the fact that there are so many people all around the world that want to come and take selfies with him. I'm happy my dad still has a calling in the realm of pornography. One of us has to."

You've had some close calls with death. Have you ever 'seen' anything?

Jo Esk, email

"I think my brushes with death have been quite tender. As in, I've never gone to the other side – at least, not as far as I know. Maybe this is the other side? To be honest, I don't believe in anything after death. It gives me some consolation knowing that there's nothing. I think we all work best with a deadline, quite a literal one. Do what you've gotta do, hope for the best and do your thing, as opposed to "Let's save some for later." It's just how I was brought up. I've been in hospitals and I've been abusing my temple along the way, but it's never gotten that far."

Megadeth or Metallica?

Jesus Merz, Facebook

"Metallica, of course. I think I heard *Master Of Puppets* first and nobody can deny its impact, even if you're not a big Metallica fan. That was a big deal when I was a kid. It was the kind of music that, because we got it on vinyl, you weren't sure if you had to listen to it on 33rpm or 45rpm. That happened to us with Celtic Frost; it sounded so weird because we weren't sure what speed we were supposed to listen to it. I still don't really know. That probably explains a lot about my early development, both as an artist and as a human being! As for Metallica and Megadeth, maybe in the States they were on more of an even playing field, but in Scandinavia at least, Metallica were always the biggest and baddest. Especially when

"I THINK I HAVE A BRIGHT FUTURE AS A VAMPIRE"



Putting the 'dead' in 'deadlines'

The Black Album came out. But by that time, I had already sort of jumped into the more grungy, artsy aspects – I found Jane's Addiction and Faith No More, and that stuff was way more intriguing to me than *Nothing Else Matters*. I'm a slow burner. My friend just bought me a copy of *Nevermind* because I denounced it when it first came out. I thought it was uncool but everybody else liked it. It's probably the same with *The Black Album*. I'm always fashionably about 20 years late but I'll definitely give it a chance and be like, "What's this youthful racket?!"

What is the significance of the sheep in the *Loveletting* video?

Anthony Pearson, Facebook

"We have a toilet paper brand here in Finland whose mascot is a sheep, and I was hoping to get a deal with them where they made black toilet paper with a black sheep and the heartagram on it. They never got interested in the idea, but I threw it out there. I thought it was just a nice symbol of the outsider – like the ugly duckling. I think we all feel like outsiders for at least some part of our lives. I never grew out of that way of looking at the world. Animals are beautiful and you rarely

get to see them in music videos so I thought it was a nice touch."

Hammer: What was the sheep's name, and did you get to pet it?

"Her name was Sysi [sounds a bit like 'Susie']. When you say 'pitch black' in Finnish, the word is 'sysimusta'. I was only introduced to her right before the shoot and it took a while – they're really nervous, and they get really agitated by any sudden movements. Getting to earn the trust right before the slaughter is no mean feat."

If you could go back in time and play *Neon Noir* to yourself 20–30 years ago, what would you have said about it back then?

Emma Powell, Facebook

"I would've said it sounds decent, and I would've stolen all the riffs. Perhaps that's what actually happened. It'd be quite boring if time was just linear. I would've stolen the best bits and made a career out of it. Here we are!"

NEON NOIR IS OUT NOW VIA HEARTAGRAM/SPINEFARM. VILLE TOURS THE UK IN MARCH AND PLAYS DOWNLOAD IN JUNE

NEON NOIR

THE DEBUT ALBUM

OUT NOW





THE SLAYLIST

CASSYETTE

From club bangers to emo anthems, Cassyette picks out the songs that made her a nu gen star

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

"KICKSTART MY HEART" by MÖTLEY CRÜE is my all-time favourite song. When I was a baby I loved it – I especially loved the intro, and when I heard it I'd run round in circles until I crashed into the kitchen cabinets. But **SLIPKNOT** are one of my favourite bands of all time – *Duality* just never gets old. I literally could never tire of that song – it's so awesome that you can listen to it in any state of mind and feel good. I had a kind of queer awakening to *All The Things She Said* by T.A.T.U. I was really young when it was released, and the single had this thing where you could type in this address to see the music video. It was like, 'Oh, what is this?' I had to ask my dad, 'So two girls can be together?' and when he said yes I became obsessed with it.

"EVANESCENCE's *Bring Me To Life* was the first time I paid attention to screaming, because it was in this more commercial-sounding rock song. I'd heard Lamb Of God before that and didn't really get it, but Evanescence helped me, so that next time I heard Lamb Of God I was like, 'Oh, sick!' I actually wrote a song that I pitched to Amy Lee, so I'm still hoping she'll take it! Every teenage girl – and guy – was obsessed with Hayley Williams from **PARAMORE**. *Misery Business* was my gateway, but when *Decode* came out I had so much affinity for it that it became my song – it had such great visuals and was part of *Twilight*. Iconic! I love making music and coming up with visuals at the same time; when I was writing *Petrichor* we were watching *Suckerpunch* at the same time, and it was like, 'This song sounds like this film!'

"Teenagers by **MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE** was another gateway song for me. Like *Bring Me To Life*, it was that sense of discovering new bands and having these more classic big pop choruses. Me and my sisters played it so often that my mom can't stand it anymore, but in fairness when she came to see me support them she loved it! It was fucking amazing supporting them – the most unreal gig I've ever played, so many emos! It was like looking at a rainbow because everyone had different-coloured hair. *Sorry You're Not A Winner* by

"I HAD A QUEER AWAKENING TO ALL THE THINGS SHE SAID BY T.A.T.U."

Cassyette: if she can party to it, she loves it

LISTEN NOW

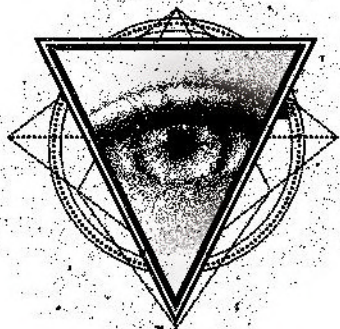
To hear Cassyette's choices, head to tinyurl.com/CassyetteSlaylist

ENTER SHIKARI was such a moment in time. My fashion sense was so fucked – I was trying to be an emo and scene kid at the same time at one point. Everyone was getting scene jeans and hoodies from H&M; I remember getting stuff and not being comfortable enough to wear it, like, 'Cool, I'm going back to all-black.'

"Omen means so much to me. **THE PRODIGY** are from my home county [Essex]. I was in Year 10 when I discovered their music and it really reminds me of this era of my life, from the end of school into college, where I'd go to illegal raves with my friends. It was fun, exciting and experimental. **NERO's** *Guilt* is in a similar vein. I went through a very intense obsession with that hardcore dance scene; I take a lot of inspiration from both worlds in my music now, but this whole era was so much fun. It reminds me of being up to no good and going for all-night benders! We'd go to clubs like Fabric, but also emo nights. My group of friends were so rogue, and it makes me so joyful to remember that stuff.

"If someone has been going to festivals like Download for a long time, I think there's a culture that can be gatekeepy, especially about the headliners. It's a real shame, because **BRING ME THE HORIZON** are amazing and are pushing rock music further and further forwards. I'm gassed they are headlining because their music is so lawless. They released this EP during lockdown [*Post Human: Survival Horror*] that had a song with Babymetal on, *Kingslayer*. It was so cool – I was partying on my own a lot and got obsessed with it. There were a lot of raging nights to that song!" **H**

SAD GIRL MIXTAPE IS OUT NOW. CASSYETTE TOURS THE UK IN MARCH



IN THE STUDIO

PUPIL SLICER

The mathcore gang's ringleader Katie Davies details a second album even more "deranged" than the last

WORDS: MATT MILLS

WHEN PUPIL SLICER released *Mirrors* in 2021, it was compared to the works of Dillinger, Protest The Hero and Rolo Tomassi. The truth is, the British rabble's debut exceeded the absurdity of even those mathcore giants, their sound as ambitious as their band name is stomach-turning, and bandleader Katie Davies is vowing the impending follow-up will be even wilder.

Mirrors was received so well, how did you feel about writing its follow-up? "I felt pretty free on *Mirrors*, but I was cautious. It was my first time doing vocals. All the feedback was, like, 'The best parts are when you're not copying other people.' I went, 'Oh, wow!', because I put in a lot of stuff referencing other stuff: 'People should like that because it sounds like another band.' So, for this one, I just did what I wanted."

What genres are you playing with this time?

"I've dialled everything up to 11. The massive bits are weirder and more intense, the death metal bits have harder riffs and, when we go soft, we go softer. When we go on a post-rock tangent, it's a progressive, nine-minute-long song with pianos and violins. It has the same mix of mathcore, hardcore, blackgaze and all the electronic elements."

THE FACTS

ALBUM:
2

STUDIO:
The Ranch,
Southampton, UK

PRODUCER:
Lewis Johns

EXPECT:
Pupil Slicer at their Pupil Sliceriest: heavier riffs, weirder songwriting and mellower post-rock segues



Which track was the hardest to write?

"In terms of time, it was that long post-rock one. I couldn't figure it out until a friend said, 'Why don't you put a filthy breakdown in this really chill song?' There's one with a *Two-Way Mirror*-type beat [referencing Loathe's down-tempo shoegaze song]. When we did it in the studio, it had 10 layers of vocal harmonies and four layers of synths."

On Twitter, you promised the album would have "Jamiroquai vocals"...

"Yeah, there's a five-minute indie rock song with falsetto during the chorus. There are some Chelsea Wolfe vocals on another one. I don't know how I did it!"

What are the lyrics about?

"It's a concept album. I did [Nine Inch Nails'] *The Downward Spiral* but made it sci-fi. It's like [movies] *Event Horizon* and *Sunshine*, with a bit of [Harlan Ellison's 1967 short story] *I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream*."

So depressing as fuck, then.

"The main themes are from videogames like *Outer Wilds* and *Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker*. It's about overcoming despair and grief so it's uplifting by the end."

Why write a concept album?

"I've played both of those games in the last year

and the themes really affected me: overcoming abject despair and finding hope in the joy of being around people. They made me cry for hours."

What was recording like?

"It was very intense. I was working my day job from 6-10am, then I went into the studio until 6pm, then worked a bit more and went to bed. That was for 28 days, with two days off. You can hear it in the vocals: they're normal for three songs, then the rest are deranged."

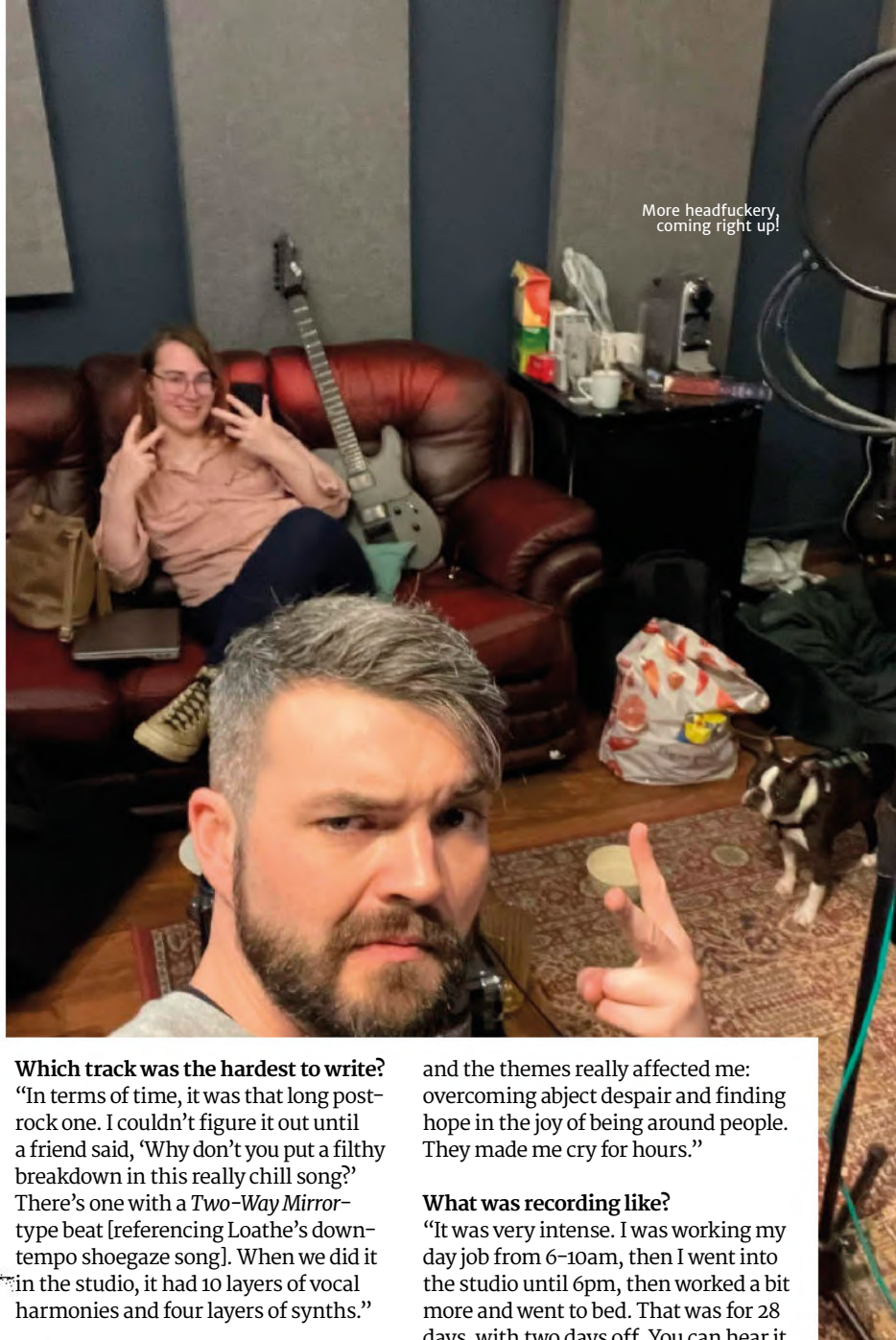
What was it like working with producer Lewis Johns?

"He's a punisher. He knows when he can get a better take out of you and isn't afraid to say it. There were times when I said, 'I don't even want to finish this album. It's such hard work and really upsetting.' But we made it through. He scrutinises so intensely because, if it doesn't sound fantastic, it'll come back on him. It was worth it because, listening back, I was like, 'Oh my god, did I play that? Did I sing that?'"

What are your expectations for this album?

"It's gonna blast everyone's dicks off. If you don't have a dick, it's still gonna blast it off." **H**

PUPIL SLICER'S SECOND ALBUM IS EXPECTED IN THE SPRING. THEY PLAY DOWNLOAD IN JUNE



More headfuckery, coming right up!

SINCE JOINING NAPALM Death in 1987, bassist Shane Embury has been an unstoppable force of both extreme creativity and creative extremity. He's also in a billion side-projects exploring just about every avenue of extreme metal you can imagine. From grindcore (Lock Up) and death metal (Brujeria), to ambient industrial noise (Dark Sky Burial) and hardcore punk (Venomous Concept), Shane has seen plenty in his career. We asked him to share some of the most important experiences that have driven him to keep pushing boundaries.

ROCK'N'ROLL WAS NEVER FAR AWAY

"I got into guitar stuff pretty early. I remember watching *Top Of The Pops* because it had the intro by Led Zeppelin and you'd have stuff like Slade and The Osmonds on, too. There was a lot of poverty in my hometown – this little village called Broseley [in Shropshire, in the West Midlands] – and we definitely struggled, but my mom was encouraging musically and she'd buy me a seven-inch each week."

HAVING SABBATH ON MY DOORSTEP WAS A BLESSING

"We'd walk around the village fantasising about stage lights and logos. Sabbath, Priest, Zeppelin and Slade all had members from our area, so it felt like it could happen. Neat Records was a big thing at the time too, bands like Raven and Venom. I used to write to the label and they'd send me signed letters from Cronos and Mark Gallagher. They were very down-to-earth blokes, but they were my heroes."

YOU CAN ALWAYS BE HEAVIER, FASTER, LOUDER

"With my first bands, we went right into the extreme stuff. Mitch [Dickinson, Warhammer guitarist/vocalist] moved to Broseley when we were 10 and soon we were getting into thrash metal. Warhammer sounded like Bathory and Possessed because we were big on tape trading – we'd get stuff from [guitarist] Bill Steer from Carcass and [UK publication] *Metal Forces*."

IT'S FUNNY HOW THINGS WORK OUT

"Warhammer split up because me and Mitch wanted to play fast after hearing the [Possessed debut] *Seven Churches* advance tape, but the other guys were more into Metallica. Next thing, we were out in Birmingham and someone tapped me on the shoulder: 'I see you've got Siege on the back of your jacket – my name is Justin [Broadrick], I play in Napalm Death. I reckon you might like us.' We went to see them, Heresy and Amebix play, and I became really good friends with

them. I quit my job pretty much to hang out with [early Napalm drummer] Mickey Harris."

TAPE-TRADING MADE THE METAL WORLD GO ROUND

"When Napalm recorded the A-side of *Scum* – long before it was released as an album – we were instrumental in getting the word out about it through tape-trading. Later, a friend of mine, Atso, from Estonia, single-handedly took the second Napalm album [1988's *From Enslavement To Obliteration*] all around the



LIFE LESSONS

SHANE EMBURY

Napalm Death's chief sonic architect shares tales of poverty, brushes with celebrity and telling Nazis to fuck off

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

Soviet Union. We played in Moscow in December 1991 and 15,000 people turned up, so that was strange. Tape-trading made you part of this wider thing, so you could go play Israel, China or Nepal, Kazakhstan, and people would know who you were."

SOMETIMES CHEAP AND CHEERFUL DOES THE JOB

"We went to this reggae studio in Worcester to record *From Enslavement To Obliteration*.

"TOM HANKS SAID WE WERE SHIT AFTER UTOPIA BANISHED"

We had six rehearsals for the entire album and recorded the music in three or four days. It was pretty rough; we slept on the floor by the mixing desk and Pot Noodle was probably the culinary delight of the day. It was very quick – it only cost, like, £300 to make."

THERE WAS NOWHERE LIKE FLORIDA IN THE 90s

"All our favourite bands were there. At the time, we were barely in the studio because we were hanging out with the Morbid Angel guys, Deicide, Obituary, Atheist! We loved it out there, though, driving around blasting out Public Enemy's *Fear Of A Black Planet* at full blast, with a Subway and 64-ounce Big Gulp soda."

YOU NEVER KNOW WHO MIGHT BE A NAPALM DEATH FAN

"I've seen Jim Carrey talking about Napalm Death a few times. Maybe that's why Cannibal Corpse got the *Ace Ventura* gig! We've heard some strange tales that there's a lot of comedians and actors out there who really like Napalm Death. When we toured with Crowbar,

Barney [Greenway, vocals] got their guitar tech a Villa top. A few years later we run into him, and he tells Barney that he works on film sets now as a key grip. He says he's working on a movie with Tom Hanks, and Hanks comes over to say, 'Interesting soccer top you've got there.' He says thanks, and he got it from his friend from Napalm Death, and Hanks apparently said, 'Napalm Death? They were shit after *Utopia Banished*.' I've no idea if that's true, though!"

MUSIC MEANS EVERYTHING TO PEOPLE WITH NOTHING

"There was a strange line between who had money and who didn't in Europe after the Soviet Union fell – you'd cross into places like Serbia and Croatia and it was like the wells dried up. We were touring with At

The Gates at the time and Tomas [Lindberg, vocals] had all this vodka and soda he was lugging around. We passed a bunch of kids literally kicking rocks on the street. We pulled over, he took out all these cases of Coca-Cola and suddenly there were kids everywhere. He was like, 'Well, these kids have *nothing*.' Some of those kids lived and breathed Napalm – we meant everything to them."

WE SING ABOUT WHAT MATTERS

"What Nick [Bullen, original ND vocalist/bassist] was doing lyrically was pretty typical of the 80s – following the same kind of path as bands like Discharge or Crass. Barney actually came from a very similar background to me, but when he came into Napalm [in 1989], he ►



For what it's worth,
Shane, we think Tom
Hanks is talking bollocks

Shane Embury: reliably fucking off Nazi punks for many decades



really wanted to keep a similar lyrical stance – very outspoken, but in a humanist way. His angle is about things that should matter to everybody, but it all ties to what Napalm had always screamed about: freedom, equality and that person in the shadows who'd spent their whole lives being ignored."

ITS NOT POLITICS – IT'S BASIC HUMAN DECENCY

"As a kid, my parents struggled, and my friends' families struggled, so I always veered towards the left. But certain things seemed like common sense, really. Even coming from a village which wasn't very racially mixed, I didn't understand people's attitudes. I liked people for who they were, not for the colour of their skin or their sexual preference."

NAZI PUNKS FUCK OFF

"Having Nazis try to break into our dressing room after we played *Nazi Punks Fuck Off* at a gig was pretty uncomfortable! I remember we did the New Titans On The Bloc tour with Sepultura and Biohazard, and a bunch of Nazi skins turned up to that and there was lots of violence. But the worst was in Estonia in 1993 – we were doing a festival and Deep Purple were headlining, so we were on in the afternoon. Barney was talking to this band

from Russia who'd helped bring us over, and they started saying this racial stuff. I'd been drinking Estonian beer all day, so I jumped through a window and hit one.

Then they grabbed Barney and someone started choking me; I was basically blue by the time [ND guitarist] Mitch Harris rescued me. We weren't a fighty band, but we've had our scraps. Fish from Marillion walked past and said, 'You mad Brummie bastards!'"

TAKE LIFE AS IT IS

"We were invited to play Brazil the week after we finished recording [1990 album] *Harmony Corruption*, to play with Sepultura. I think Max [Cavaleria] was getting it in the neck, because people were saying they'd sold out, but they were *Sepultura*, of course they hadn't fucking sold out! It's not their fault people thought they were amazing! They're lifelong friends of ours."

THE FACES CHANGE BUT THE PASSION STAYS THE SAME

"There's always going to be difficulties in bands – it's like a family. We're brothers, but we'll argue about things like setlists. Even on the last record, with Mitch [Harris] moving away to the States and me writing the songs,

"RONNIE JAMES DIO MADE ME CRY"

we still got him over, he was still part of it. John Cooke will be the guitarist from now on, but certainly from '92 to very recently, we've all been close."

DIO WAS A TRUE HEAVY METAL ICON

"Meeting Ronnie James Dio is the most starstruck I've ever been. We'd met Geezer [Butler] when we were rehearsing because he was using the same space, so he introduced us. Ronnie was with his wife and had this exceptional memory. He asked where we were from and I said 'Sparkbrook', and he just went, 'Oh, excellent curry houses there!' Later, he put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'You know I like Napalm Death, don't you? Never stop', and I'd already been emotional, but that was it – I broke down. Ronnie James Dio made me cry!" **H**

VENOMOUS CONCEPT'S NEW ALBUM, *THE GOOD SHIP LOLLIPOP*, IS OUT FEB 24 VIA EXTRINSIC. NAPALM DEATH TOUR THE UK IN MARCH

ROBOMAGIC PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH ITB
THE FINAL TOUR EVER

KISS®

END OF THE ROAD WORLD TOUR

SATURDAY 3 JUNE • PLYMOUTH HOME PARK STADIUM
MONDAY 5 JUNE • BIRMINGHAM RESORTS WORLD ARENA
TUESDAY 6 JUNE • NEWCASTLE UTILITA ARENA
WEDNESDAY 5 JULY • LONDON THE O2
FRIDAY 7 JULY • MANCHESTER AO ARENA
SATURDAY 8 JULY • GLASGOW OVO HYDRO



KISSONLINE.COM
ROBOMAGICLIVE.COM



RABBITS BLACK



THE STORY BEHIND THE BOOK OF HEAVY METAL (MARCH OF THE METALLIANS) DREAM EVIL

Fredrik Nordström spent the 90s revolutionising extreme metal as a producer. But in the new millennium, his own band were bringing classic metal back in a big way

WORDS: RICH HOBSON • PICTURES: WILL IRELAND

'METAAAAAAAAAAL!' NOT EVEN three seconds into *The Book Of Heavy Metal*, the opening song – and title track – of Dream Evil's third album, the Swedish trad metal revivalists were nailing their colours to the mast in bombastic, overblown and entirely unironic fashion. But then, that had been the point of Dream Evil from its inception, guitarist and founder Fredrik Nordström building the band around the glory days of yore, when titans like Iron Maiden and Judas Priest were defining the genre, shifting millions of records in the process.

In some ways, it was almost ironic. Fredrik had earned his fame helping to shift the goalposts of how metal looked and sounded through his production work with Gothenburg's legendary melodic death metal scene. Sweden's answer to Ross Robinson, Fredrik's work on legendary releases by At The Gates, Dark Tranquillity and In Flames set the tone for vast swathes of modern metal, while his later work with Opeth and Dimmu Borgir helped transform the extreme metal landscape. Needless to say, people weren't exactly expecting denim and leather super-fandom from his own band.

THE FACTS

RELEASED:
2004

ALBUM:
The Book Of Heavy Metal

PERSONNEL:
Niklas Isfeldt (vocals), Fredrik Nordström (guitar), Gus G (guitar), Peter Stålfors (bass), Snowy Shaw (drums)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
45 (Sweden)



"There were definitely people who expected Dream Evil to have that melodic death metal sound, so it was quite the surprise when they got a real heavy metal album instead!" Fredrik chuckles. "I actually discovered heavy metal really late. I was playing in a band with this guy who introduced me to bands like Accept. The first time I heard *Balls To The Wall* I went bananas, like: 'Play it again!'"

Unfortunately, Fredrik's discovery came right as traditional metal fell on its arse. While he found great success with his production work, there was a sense of terminal optimism to his efforts to get his band, Snakeskin Cowboys, off the ground while the likes of Nirvana and Faith No More ruled the airwaves. Thankfully, his production work also laid the seeds for Dream Evil, a trip to Thessaloniki seeing him cross paths with guitarist extraordinaire Gus G.

"Gus wanted to move to Sweden and build a music career, but it seems like nobody wanted him back then!" Fredrik says. "He was trying to survive by offering guitar lessons but literally nobody was taking them at the time, which is crazy considering if you went back to the same music stores he was

Dream Evil wrote the book on heavy metal. Well, sort of...

putting those ads in five years later, you could buy his signature guitar."

The pair struck up a friendship and agreed to collaborate on a new band. Meanwhile, the ever-turbulent tides of music were shifting as the archetypes of the classic metal sound began to make a comeback. Germans Blind Guardian had released their seminal power-metal albums *Imaginations From The Other Side* (1995) and *Nightfall In Middle-Earth* (1998), while in the US Iced Earth had shifted more than 60,000 records with 1996's *The Dark Saga* and 1998's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. But it was the efforts of Sweden's homegrown heavy metal heroes Hammerfall that truly set Dream Evil in motion.

"I was asked to record the first Hammerfall album, [1997's] *Glory To The Brave*," Fredrik recalls. "That's actually how I met Niklas [Isfeldt, vocals] and Pete [Stålfors, bass]. I felt like if they could start making heavy metal music, I could also do that."

With most of the members now in place, the only thing that remained was to fill the vacant drum spot. For that, Fredrik turned to a local legend: former King Diamond/Mercyful Fate drummer Snowy Shaw.

"Snowy was a hired gun from the beginning," Fredrik says. "I've read



his book and he said that when I approached him with these classic-style heavy metal songs in the 90s, he thought he was on *Candid Camera*. He didn't believe I could work on the death metal stuff and still want to sing these cheesy songs, ha ha! But he's one of the best drummers on the planet, and a very good friend, so he was a natural fit."

Released in 2002, *Dragonslayer* was a triumphant, fist-pumping blast of old school heavy metal. Contrary to their label's fears, the record quickly earned a fanbase of young fans who had missed the boat on metal's glory years, but yearned for its bombastic sound.

"Hammerfall opened the doors," Fredrik admits. "When I saw them playing the last shows of *Glory To The Brave* they'd got about 600 people in this tiny room, and more or less nobody was over 20 years old. When we played our own shows, it was still the same – for those kids, bands like Dream Evil and Hammerfall were their first proper heavy metal band."

A little over 12 months on from recording their debut, Dream Evil already had a follow-up on the shelves.

Titled *Evilized*, it broke into the Top 100 in the Swedish and Japanese charts, cementing the sense that there was something special starting to build around the group. This made it all the more critical that their third album should build even bigger. And, as with their formation, it was working with Hammerfall that ended up inspiring the next evolutionary step of Dream Evil's career.

"THE FIRST TIME I HEARD BALLS TO THE WALL I WENT BANANAS"

FREDRIK NORDSTRÖM

"The idea for *The Book Of Heavy Metal* actually came while I was recording with Hammerfall," Fredrik explains. "I was doing the guitar solos with Stefan [Elmgren] and was like, 'We should put harmonies on the guitars here and here.' And he was like, 'No, that'll sound too much like Helloween.'"

So I put my foot down: 'No, that's in the book of heavy metal!' It became a running joke – I'd ask Snowy to do a drum fill and he'd ask why: 'Well, it's in the book of heavy metal!'"

Not ones to waste a killer title when they find one, Dream Evil decided that *The Book Of Heavy Metal* shouldn't just be the title of their next album, but a mission statement for what they wanted to achieve.

"We tried to make the whole record feel like a real contribution to heavy metal history," Fredrik says. "I spent 10 weeks on that album; we'd be recording until we literally ran out of material, writing so much we'd even be doing it in the toilet. But if you're gonna call your album *The Book Of Heavy Metal*, it has to be good to live up to its name."

The writing for *The Book Of Heavy Metal* ended up being so productive the band wrote 64 songs. In keeping with metal's 'power to the people' ethos, they brought in a 'heavy metal jury' to pick the 12 best songs for the final release, gathering non-musician metal fans they had met, ranging from electricians to bankers and teachers.

"We wanted the input of the people who'd actually buy the album," Fredrik explains. "We had a few boxes of beer, bottles of Jack Daniel's and basically said, 'Have fun.' Then got them to pick their favourites."

While both the band and the heavy metal jury were effusive in their

Peter Stålfors (left) and Fredrik Nordström in full swing at Hammerfest 2012

“OUR LABEL TOLD US IT WAS TOO METAL TO BE A SINGLE”

FREDRIK NORDSTRÖM

excitement about the album's title track – *The Book Of Heavy Metal (March Of The Metallians)* to give its full title – again the band faced opposition from the label when it came to choosing a lead single.

“Century Media said it was *too* metal to release as a single!” Fredrik reveals. “So I got back in touch and said, ‘I strongly recommend, as a music producer, that you take this song and release it.’”

Released on July 13, 2004, *The Book Of Heavy Metal* this time broke the top 50 in the Swedish and Japanese album charts, and the band were invited out on tour with NWOBHM legends Saxon. Unfortunately, they didn't get much chance to enjoy their spoils.

“You could tell things were really taking off for Dream Evil, but everybody quit!” Fredrik says. “Gus left when he realised Dream Evil were never going to be a full touring band. With Snowy, we got into a silly fight over bullshit.”

Though Fredrik was later able to coax Niklas and Peter back into the ranks with assurances the band wouldn't be on tour eight months of the year (“That's what the label had wanted,” Fredrik admits), the founding line-up of Dream Evil was fractured. Even so, *The Book Of Heavy Metal* remains a definitive statement from the band, its unstoppable march, histrionic shrieks and virtuosic leads ensuring it couldn't be more classically metal if it'd been spawned from the loins of Rob Halford. But although the song is one of Dream Evil's biggest, it doesn't quite take the top spot on streaming platforms – its 15 million streams on Spotify lag behind *The Chosen Ones*, which has had more than 27 million listens.

“It's funny, actually... The reason *Chosen Ones* is so high is because people kept using it when uploading their own videos of *World Of Warcraft*, and using *Chosen Ones* as the soundtrack on YouTube,” Fredrik says delightedly. “But we have done so many interviews where somebody says, ‘If an alien came down from outer space and wanted to know what heavy metal is, what would you show them?’ And my answer is still – and always will be – *The Book Of Heavy Metal*.” ■

DREAM EVIL WILL TOUR THE UK FROM MARCH 7



Siege of Power

THIS IS TOMORROW

The old school Death Metal supergroup feat. Chris Reifert, Bob Bagchus, Paul Baayens and Theo van Eekelen with its 2nd strike! Available February 17 on CD and LP!
Pre-listen: www.metalblade.com/siegeofpower



The Black Dahlia Murder

YULE 'EM ALL!

Initially the dopest music DVD ever with live performances, cameos and moderation, now the tribute to the one and only Trevor Strnad. Available now as a Digi-DVD.



ASHES LIE STILL

Epic brutal Death Metal from UK's finest! Relentless!
Available now as Digi-CD and on vinyl!
Pre-listen: metalblade.com/ingested



www.metalblade.com



youtube.com/metalbladerecords

www.facebook.com/metalbladerecords



The Orchard



YOUR SHOUT

LORNA SHORE ARE TOO MAINSTREAM

...and other patently silly declarations, funny confessions and compliments you had to offer on our 2023 preview, the return of Ville Valo to the cover of *Hammer*, and more

SILLY VILLE

Ville is back! So happy to see him on the cover of *Hammer* again – have been a fan forever and he always looks stunning. Glad to see he hasn't lost his sense of humour either – mad as a box of bats, that one. That Bullet-Point For My Valentine pun is awful, but in a typically Ville way!

Joey Guia, email

What a way to kick off the New Year, eh? We missed Ville while he was away, so to have the master back at work is truly gratifying – that new album is stunning, too.

AND THAT'S GOODNIGHT FROM HIM

It was kind of obvious Ville didn't want to be in Him in the end, but I still enjoyed *Tears On Tape* quite a bit.

Dexter Caulfield, Facebook

You're certainly not alone in your feelings there. Still, as *Neon Noir* shows, that passion is now completely ablaze again. Huzzah!

THE SECOND CUMMING

I love having Ville Valo back, but when are we getting a Netflix series about his dad's sex shop?

Nicki Hutson, Twitter



Lorna Shore: we preferred them before they went mainstream. Oh wait...

Funny you should ask, Nicki, as we talk about that very topic this issue (see p.12)! Well, the shop, at any rate – we're not sure even Netflix could handle an over-sexed Ville Valo.

OUT TO GET ME

Poor young Corey Taylor. First Slipknot threatened to beat him up if he didn't join their band, then Soulfly kidnapped him!

Greg Aliason, Facebook

It's not all bad, Greg. He helms one of metal's biggest names this century, and – as he attested in last month's *Hammer* – had the time of his life recording *Jumpdafuckup* with Max Cavalera. First world problems, eh?!

COZY NIGHT

Him was the sort of band that, if you got what they were about, you ended up growing up with them. That unrestrained, honest romanticism and the 'cozier' side of Nordic melancholy had never

been blended in that particular shade before. Ville Valo was the creative heart of Him, so him returning is awesome. Thank you, *Metal Hammer*, for the issue.

Michael Night, Facebook

Thanks, Michael, we're glad you liked it! It certainly feels like there's a genuine sense of romance back in metal now Ville has returned – just in time for Valentine's, too!

LORNA BORE

I just got the *Metal Hammer* issue in the mail and that Lorna Shore headline – "We wanna make people cry and punch each other in the head"... so stupid. Will Ramos is as awful as the mainstream music he makes.

Brandon Konczyk, Facebook

As yes, Brandon, deathcore – that famously mainstream genre. As brilliant as they are, we don't see Lorna Shore becoming a Britney or Lady Gaga (unfortunately).

#TWEETS

Bring back shoplifting
Thou
(@EyehateThou)

It's impossible to listen to Children Of Bodom at the gym without triumphantly punching the air at least 3 times per song
Serena Cherry, Svalbard/Noctule
(@whatacoolfridge)

One of these days I should just do a full industrial metal record tbh
Backxwash
(@Backxwash)

Men in bands are an epidemic
Scene Queen
(@Scenequeenrocks)

Hey @JustinBieber, I hear you're in #Amsterdam! So am I! I challenge you to a smoke off!!!
David Draiman, Disturbed
(@davidmdraiman)

Ville Valo: bringing sweet, sweet romance back to the pages of *Hammer*



LUDICROUS LUCRETIA

Hi! A reader, here, with just another random thought: it recently dawned on me that Megadeth's *Lucretia* would sound better with Sid James' laugh – don't you agree? Ha, ha, ha! (Try not to hear him!) Cheerio!

Radu, email

Sounds like a viral TikTok in the making to us – different laughs at the start of *Lucretia*. Then again, maybe not...

A SIGH FOR THE TIMES

Dear *Metal Hammer*, longtime reader here, since the 1980s, when your magazine delighted me and my fellow outcast metalhead friends in high school in rural New Mexico – a wonderful diversion amid a bleak landscape. I wanted to say how much I enjoyed your 'The 10 best black metal albums of 2022' list, and was delighted to see my favourite band, Sigh, represented there. I'm continually impressed by the

quality of the writing and editing at *Metal Hammer*.

Eric Bourland, email

Thanks Eric, that's incredibly kind of you to say!

TROLLFEST

I am writing to you with a heavy heart as a long-time metal lover that there is a huge prejudice against Japanese metal with Western metal fans. Babymetal is a prime example of a great Japanese metal band that is viewed by Western metal fans as 'fake' or 'posers'. I feel this is extremely unwarranted.

Jason Stillwell, email

Hi Jason, there are certainly... vocal corners of the internet that like to gatekeep on what is and isn't 'true' metal. Fuck the lot of 'em. Babymetal are ace, just as Ghost are ace, and anyone who truly loves music and tries to build a global community is ace. We're not going to stop covering brilliant bands.

THE BIG DEBATE

ITV chat show *Loose Women* prompted complaints when TV personality Katie Piper used the words "toxic" and "Satanic" in response to the TikTok video *A Day In The Life Of A Gothic Baby*, causing the Sophie Lancaster Foundation to release a statement.

THEY SAID

"People on TV have a real responsibility. Why use their platform to reiterate the tired old stereotypes and negativity that do such harm?"

YOU SAY

Alternative people have lost their lives due to hatred. The Sophie Foundation had a right to say something, that woman was way off the mark with her statements on TV.

Ellysa Champ, Facebook

It's allowing alt kids to be themselves without being chastised and ridiculed. I love seeing all the baby bats finally feeling comfortable in their own skin.

Emma Ivanka, Facebook

Talk shows can have lots of different opinions, which I think you just have to take with a pinch of salt.

Ruth Hankey, Facebook

Not only have people sadly lost their lives from this kind of ignorance, there were many alternative people jailed for crimes they didn't commit because of how they dressed and the music they listened to. It's easy to point the finger at the "different" person and blame them.

Chloë Hime Sakura Waite, Facebook

What's toxic and satanic is the entertainment industry. The baby looks happy FFS.

Marcia Medeiros, Facebook

JOIN THE BIG DEBATE AT FACEBOOK.COM/ GROUPS/METALHAMMERREADERS

HAMMER STEREO

What's been blowing our office speakers



IN FLAMES

Foregone

"Hook after hook. With added hooks. In Flames are back and on fire (sorry not sorry)"

ELEANOR GOODMAN
EDITOR



BIG | BRAVE

Nature Morte

"Elemental, startling, and elsewhere – an album that has you on tenterhooks throughout"

JONATHAN SELZER
REVIEWS EDITOR



CONCRETE AGE

Bardo Thodol

"Heavy, groovy, incredibly varied goodness. Thanks for the heads-up, Rich!"

VANESSA THORPE
PRODUCTION EDITOR



VV

Neon Noir

"What better way to kick off the new year?!"

LOUISE BROCK
ART EDITOR

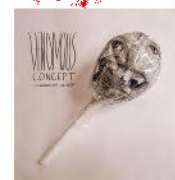


CONCRETE AGE

Bardo Thodol

"Seps-style thrash with added world music influences – mad, rad and utterly glorious"

RICH HOBSON
STAFF WRITER



VENOMOUS CONCEPT

"The Good Ship Lollipop" "Shane Embury's punk-metal pranksters get in touch with their inner AC/DC"

DAVE EVERLEY
ASSOCIATE EDITOR



NEW NOISE

HOLY FAWN

Call it post-metal, blackgaze or alternative... the Arizona quartet are taking heavy music in divine new directions

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

HOLY FAWN AREN'T strictly a metal band, but they are undeniably heavy. Their second album, *Dimensional Bleed* – released towards the end of 2022, and co-produced with Mike Watts (The Dillinger Escape Plan, Glassjaw) – is a wild ride, taking elements of post-rock, blackgaze, goth, post-punk, dream pop and grunge, and manipulating them all into a brand new super-strain of alternative music. Too dreamy for hardcore, too abrasive for indie, too pretty for straight metal... they're slippery suckers.

"I don't really think we sat down and decided what music we wanted to make," says Holy Fawn guitarist and vocalist Ryan Osterman, when asked to describe exactly what his band are. "We all have differing interests, so we never intentionally wrote a song to sound a specific way. It's never really been pencilled in, what we're trying to do. It's just what we do."

"We all have wildly different tastes," adds bassist Alex Rieth, picking up on the theme. "Our playlist covers everything from hip hop to black metal and everything in between. Once the four of us get together, that's the most exciting part – this weird mesh of things that probably don't belong together, but with us it somehow... works."

This approach has helped Holy Fawn land on the radars of similarly rule-breaking bands in the metal sphere. Stints supporting Rolo Tomassi and Deafheaven put them in the company of those looking to change the boundaries of what heaviness can sound like. They were invited out as special guests on a European tour with Cult Of Luna in 2020 before the

pandemic scuppered their plans, showing that even if Holy Fawn had moved away from the more traditional metal (or as Ryan puts it, "super-extreme death metal") bands the members had previously played in, they could still hold their own in the most crushing of company.

"We are emotionally heavy," Ryan says. "It's not traditional heaviness, but it's heavier music. We use a lot of fuzz pedals. I think exploring that space between really heavy guitars and something a little more... let's call it beautiful, is something I enjoy."

"If I had to label it then I think we're post-metal," nods Alex. "I say that as I'm a huge fan of Isis, and I think we occupy the same emotional space that they do. I'm not sure everyone would agree, but it makes me happy to think of it in those terms."

Although they embrace underground sensibilities, there's also a commercial appeal to Holy Fawn – especially considering the undeniable influence of massive 90s alternative bands on their sound. There's a chance that if Holy Fawn continue progressing in this way, they could end up crossing over to a lot of people – although the band admit to being apprehensive about shooting for the big leagues. To wit, when the band supported Thrice on their *Vheissu* 20th anniversary tour, the jump up to several-thousand-capacity rooms turned out to be an ill fit.

"When we joined the Thrice tour, playing big rooms, it was a real culture shock for us," Ryan admits. "I feel more comfortable playing smaller rooms and making those more genuine connections with people."

"Using Nirvana as a case study, Kurt Cobain never wanted to be in an arena

IN SHORT SOUNDS LIKE:

A Frankenstein's monster of The Cure, Bauhaus, Sonic Youth and Cult Of Luna

FOR FANS OF:

Deafheaven, Narrow Head, Slow Crush

LISTEN TO:

True Loss



Holy Fawn: only open minds need apply

band," adds Alex. "It's a tough one. There's the weird, artsy moral compass inside of us that is anti-corporate everything, and I don't want to be that band [that suddenly becomes huge]. But if I could be successful and make a living out of that band, that does sound fucking rad. It goes both ways."

In the present, Holy Fawn are happy just carving out their own niche. Thankfully, experimental tendencies are much more widely embraced now than they were 20 years ago, and the metal scene is opening up to bands that previously would have had no place here. Over the last few years, bands such as Alcest and Deafheaven have namechecked influences including My Bloody Valentine,



Cocteau Twins and The Jesus And Mary Chain: bands on the opposite end of the sonic spectrum from heavy metal. In turn, they have inspired whole new schools of extremity.

"I think the music scene is cyclical," says Ryan. "It inspires a whole new thing. Music has to evolve or it grows stale, and I think that the bands you mentioned, The Cure or My Bloody Valentine or Slowdive or whatever these people are getting into... you realise that they can co-exist together with something heavier. It's an interesting juxtaposition too, which makes it new and refreshing. And when you listen to an album like [1989's] *Disintegration* or [1982's] *Pornography* by The Cure, then you

**"OUR MUSIC IS
A WEIRD MESH
OF THINGS THAT
DON'T BELONG
TOGETHER"**

realise they aren't just a radio band – there are some pretty heavy tracks on there."

The spirit of the goth-pop legends certainly looms large in Holy Fawn's sound. The music they make is brilliant, and if you're a fan of dark, brooding, achingly melodic tunes, then *Dimensional Bleed* is unquestionably going to steal your heart on first listen. Holy Fawn are yet more proof that heavy music has never sounded so diverse and exciting. **H**

**HOLY FAWN PLAY LONDON'S
ELECTRIC BALLROOM WITH
ROLO TOMASSI AND HERIOT
ON FEB 15. *DIMENSIONAL BLEED*
IS OUT NOW VIA WAX BODEGA**

NEW NOISE

ESCUELA GRIND

The rap-quoting New England grindcore progressives endorsed by Kurt Ballou and Napalm Death

WORDS: MATT MILLS



ESCUELA MEANS 'SCHOOL' in Spanish, and the goal of this grindcore rabble is to teach the rest of their genre how to lighten up.

"In the United States, grindcore music is really good, but the people are salty and conservative," says Escuela Grind's drummer, Jesse Adan Fuentes.

This Massachusetts band's second album, *Memory Theater*, adds levity to the grind canon using songs like *Cliffhanger*; despite being two-and-a-half minutes of blastbeats and snarling, it also happens to chuck in some lyrics from an 80s rap classic.

"For this record, we wanted to have hooks," says singer and guitarist Katerina Economou. "We were listening to the song like, 'What's the hook?'" It sounded like *The Message* by Grandmaster Flash, so in the end I just started singing that over the pattern."

Just because Escuela Grind have a mischievous glint in their eye, don't assume they can't bludgeon the shit out of you. Jesse and Katerina started making music together out of a mutual

love of Converge, Napalm Death and other such nasty noises, and *Memory Theater* channels the erratic yet slyly intellectual spirit of both those bands.

But beyond that, the music twitches between grind and slower, heavier death metal. Bruisers such as *Faulty Blueprints* are all about transforming from Repulsion to Cannibal Corpse and back again at the drop of a hat. Such fine-tuned lunacy is winning Escuela Grind the right kind of admirers: *Memory Theater* was produced by Converge guitarist Kurt Ballou. Plus, the band will tour the UK with Napalm Death in March.

"It's a dream come true!" Jesse declares.

Katerina concurs. "I feel like Napalm Death have always had a positive message," they say. "They lead the way and help the genre steer away from its more negative traits. We continue that tradition." **H**

MEMORY THEATER IS OUT NOW VIA MNRK HEAVY. ESCUELA GRIND TOUR THE UK WITH NAPALM DEATH IN MARCH

IN SHORT SOUNDS LIKE:

A grindcore band fighting a death metal band at an 80s hip hop show

FOR FANS OF:

Napalm Death, Obituary, Heriot

LISTEN TO:

Endowed With Windows



SKIN FAILURE

Former Black Peaks frontman cuts loose with some unhinged crossover thrash

WORDS: REMFRY DEDMAN

BEER AND THRASH. Have there ever been two more satisfying bedfellows? Bristol-based band Skin Failure have embraced the art of partying with *Radillac*, their debut full-length album.

"The focus is simple," says vocalist Will Gardner. "Is everyone in the audience having as much fun as humanly possible? Are we having as much fun as possible? We're trying to make 'write the best music within this bonkers genre' possible."

'Bonkers' is the best descriptor of Skin Failure's music, its members coming from backgrounds in alt metal (Black Peaks) and math rock (Memory Of Elephants) to birth a monster that mixes classic thrash with the muscular melodic sensibilities of Every Time I Die.

"About seven months or so after Black Peaks had broken up, Dave [Larkin, former Black Peaks bassist] called me up and said, 'I've been jamming with these guys...'" Will says. "He sent me three instrumental tracks and I was like, 'This is amazing!' It was so far removed from anything I've done before."

Originally, the plan was to get a variety of guests from the Bristol scene to sing on the songs, as the musicians couldn't envisage one person who would be capable of doing all the vocal theatrics they had in mind. That's when Dave suggested they speak to Will.

"I was a massive thrash-head back in the day," he says. "With these guys, I get to head down to Bristol once a month, hang out, drink a lot and live out my teenage fantasies of fronting a thrash band!" **H**

RADILLAC IS OUT NOW VIA SMALL POND

IN SHORT SOUNDS LIKE:

A giddy mix of headbanging thrash riffs marinated in a vat of Stella Artois

FOR FANS OF:

Mutoid Man, Power Trip, Every Time I Die

LISTEN TO:

Sleeveless Jesus/The Void

ISAFJÖRD

Post-rock luminaries celebrate Iceland's music and landscapes

WORDS: WILL MARSHALL • PICTURES: AGÚST ATLASON

SOUNDS LIKE:

An emotionally devastating journey soaring over Icelandic forests and glaciers

FOR FANS OF:

Sólstafir, Sigur Rós, Mogwai

LISTEN TO:

Hjartastjaki

TAKING THEIR NAME from the Icelandic town of Ísafjörður that its founders are from, Isafjörð reflect the beauty of Iceland's incredible countryside as well as its revered post-rock and metal scenes. But then, that's hardly surprising considering the band is made up of Addi Tryggvason from Sólstafir and Ragnar Zolberg, the former guitarist of prog metal troupe Pain Of Salvation.

"We're both mesmerised by Ísafjörður and nature," Addi explains. "The more time I spend in Iceland, the more I'm still just constantly mesmerised by it. Besides, band names like 'Chicago' were taken!"

Fans of Sólstafir will recognise the melancholic, sparse melodies throughout Isafjörð's debut album, *Hjartastjaki*. But as the pair tell it, this

minimalism was more a reflection of their process, with the entire album written and recorded in six days in a countryside studio due to time constraints. Ragnar jokes that they had to make the most of "an out-of-tune piano and half a drum kit".

This was a blessing in disguise: the lyrics of *Hjartastjaki* became stream-of-consciousness observations inspired by the stunning panoramas just

outside their front door. Written almost entirely in Icelandic, these lyrics lend the music a raw honesty.

"It's what comes from within when you tune yourself into a very creative environment," Addi says. "Like being on mushrooms and telling your mom your worst secrets!" **H**

HJARTASTJAKI IS OUT NOW VIA SVART RECORDS



CHUGGABOOM

The tongue-in-cheek nu metalcore pranksters bringing a bit of levity to the scene

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL • PICTURES: WILL NORBURY

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:

Self-aware more-brootal-than-thou metalcore with a nu metal twist

FOR FANS OF:

Attila, Jared Dines, The Hell

LISTEN TO:

No Rules, No Limits

SINCE 2015, THEY'VE been annoying serious metal fans with their ironic takes on metalcore, but are we finally seeing an evolution for masked weirdos Chuggaboom?

"We realised that if we just do songs mocking metalcore tropes, we're only going to be as good as those bands," says vocalist Levi Taurus. "So we're more interested in turning it on ourselves. Metal is all a bit serious – we're trying to make it a bit more fun."

They're certainly making it less serious. The band's latest album, *Death Pledge*, is more nuanced than their previous work, but it's also not going to be compared to *The Dark Side Of The*

Moon any time soon, Levi name-checking the likes of Steel Panther and Limp Bizkit as recent influences.

"That kind of rapped thing we did on [single] *No Rules, No Limits* was definitely a new flavour for us," Levi says. "We're not just trying to be funny, we're trying to write good songs. I don't think of us as a comedy band. We just want to start a party."

Comedy or not, if you're looking for a good time, Chuggaboom might just give you one. **H**

DEATH PLEDGE IS OUT NOW VIA DEAD SERIOUS. CHUGGABOOM TOUR THE UK FROM MARCH 10

IN THE KNOW

What your favourite bands are listening to



ORBIT CULTURE

"ORBIT CULTURE ARE

fucking crushing it – their latest record, 2020's *Nija*, is insanely good. I can't wait to hear where they go next."

ROBB FLYNN, MACHINE HEAD





HOARD ALMIGHTY

Box sets, underground oddities and all the essential merch you need this month



AVATAR

**DANCE DEVIL DANCE: CLOUDS DIPPED IN CHROME
SUPER DELUXE VINYL**

AVATARMETAL.COM

£271

RIGHT. AVATAR. WEIRD band. *Great* band. What's up with the price tag? Well, this super-deluxe edition of their new record, *Dance Devil Dance*, is more metal than their previous efforts – it literally comes packaged in a metal O-card/slipcase embossed with the band's emblem, which is apparently a right old pain in the arse to do. Soldering/welding/laser-cutting aside, this 'Clouds Dipped In Chrome' vinyl variant boasts a gatefold sleeve, a 24-page photo book, the aforementioned O-card – very metal, very complicated – and an autographed postcard. Let's face it, the money's being pissed away on that O-card, right? Help these intrepid explorers of carnivalesque Swedish metal out and grab a copy if you wish. They're limited to 300, too. Oof.

tinyurl.com/avatar-box



METALLICA SKATE DECK

£112.99

Grind, slide, ollie and flip the shit out of this new Powell-Peralta deck. Try not to let your Metalli-fandom go too far, though – just because James Hetfield snapped his wrist skateboarding doesn't mean you have to snap yours or anything.

tinyurl.com/metallica-deck



MJÖLNIR HAMMER

£56.15

We can't promise this artfully engraved replica of Thor's mighty Mjölner will summon lightning bolts (*please* don't go wagging it about in a thunderstorm), but it sure does look the part.

tinyurl.com/mjolnir-hammer



NES CARTRIDGE COASTER SETS

£31.20-£45.80

Rent? Bills? Just a construct. Fuck it. Focus on what's *real*: your insatiable lust for nostalgia. These gorgeous NES-style, 3D-printed coasters, lovingly crafted from plant-based plastics, should do the trick. Just don't try to play them.

tinyurl.com/nesc-coasters



CTHULHU TEA

£21.60

This isn't just any Cthu-brew, you know. This is a loose-leaf gunpowder green tea, potent enough to wake The Great Old One himself and make his tentacled breath smell radiant. Comes with an equally Lovecraftian bookmark, too.

tinyurl.com/cthulhu-tea



FRANK FRAZETTA BOOK

£150

Abandon your attempts at coolness and dive into this luscious, extensive assemblage of Frank Frazetta's oil paintings, sketches, comic-book panels and more. Turns out the guy who did Molly Hatchet's artwork had a pretty good eye, eh?

tinyurl.com/frazetta-book



ELDEN RING BOARD GAME

£75-£364

Worried that rolling blackouts and the country's descent into the economic sewer might hamper your *Elden Ring* addiction? Fear not! This meticulously crafted analogue edition can be played by candlelight, even as public services collapse around you.

tinyurl.com/elden-board



KATATONIA WOODEN BOX-SET

£44

Miserable prog is business and business is... miserable, if you're considering Katatonia's 12th album, *Sky Void Of Stars*. Celebrate melancholy with this wooden CD box set, featuring a spooky crow pendant, pin badge and Atmos-ready Blu-ray.

tinyurl.com/void-box



MEMORIAM BOX SET

£116.99

Curse the follies of war while revelling in sublime Dan Seagrave artwork with this beautiful *Rise To Power* box set bundle. It contains vinyl, CD and cassette versions of the album, along with a graphic novel and t-shirt.

tinyurl.com/rise-boxset



COSTIN CHIOREANU ART BOOK

£45

Artist and musician Costin Chioreanu's eerie, evocative art has been adopted by metal royalty like Ulver, Napalm Death, Ghost and Paradise Lost. This 200-page collection compiles work from 2015-2022, from commissions to Costin's own explorations.

tinyurl.com/costin-book



POLYPHIA HOODIE

£39.18

Remember that you will stay snugly in this ethically sourced hoodie. Passing metallers will remember to investigate Polyphia's latest album. For those who don't listen to silly instrumental rock, well, it just reads like a threat.

tinyurl.com/poly-hoodie



FRENZY ISLAND BOOK

£1.99/£8.99

Richard E Rock is as happy with a pen in his hand as he is caught in a mosh. His second novel involves aliens, ghoulish experiments and Rob Halford, all combining to make it the perfect sci-fi horror page-turner for your post-gig train journey!

tinyurl.com/frenzy-island



HAUNT COAT

£147.99

Bring a dash of darkened glamour to your depressingly mainstream winterwear with this pitch-black trenchcoat. Elegant lines and detailing adds to the charm, making it the perfect coat in which to eerily emerge from the shadows.

tinyurl.com/haunt-coat

SUBSCRIPTIONS

FREE FLARES JET2 EARPHONES WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE

**FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES,
METAL HAMMER HAS DELIVERED THE
BIGGEST AND THE BEST IN THE WORLD
OF METAL TO READERS' DOORS.**

**GIFT
WORTH
£39.99!+**



- **ADVANCED
JET SOUND-
BALANCING
TECHNOLOGY**

- **PRECISION-
TURNED FROM
AEROSPACE-
GRADE ALUMINIUM**

- **LIGHTWEIGHT
& COMFORTABLE
FIT - DRIVER
DIAMETER 10MM**

- **MICROPHONE
& CONTROLLER
CAPABILITIES**

**PAY JUST
£29.50 FOR
6 MONTHS***

**BY DIRECT DEBIT, SAVING
35%, AND GET HAMMER
DELIVERED TO YOUR
DOOR EVERY MONTH**

**35%
OFF**



**48%
OFF**



**FOR AN EXTRA £7.50
SUBSCRIBE TO THE PRINT
AND DIGITAL BUNDLE
SO YOU CAN ENJOY
HAMMER ANYWHERE!**

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

WWW.MAGAZINESDIRECT.COM/B34A

OR CALL 0330 3331113 AND QUOTE B34A

Offer closes March 2, 2023. Direct Debit Offer open to new subscribers only. Offer is available to UK subscribers only. *£29.50 (print) and £37 (print and digital) payable by 6-monthly UK Direct Debit. This price is guaranteed for the first 12 months and we will notify you in advance of any price changes. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue (up to eight weeks overseas). The full subscription rate is for 12 months (13 issues) and includes postage and packaging. Please allow up to 6 weeks for delivery. Your gift will be delivered separately within 60 days after your first payment has cleared. Gifts only available to subscribers on the UK mainland. Gifts not available with a digital subscription. In the unlikely event that we run out of this gift, we promise to offer you an alternative gift of the same value. Payment is non-refundable after the 14-day cancellation period, unless exceptional circumstances apply. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries, please call: +44 (0) 330 333 1113. Lines are open Monday-Friday 8:30am-7pm, Saturday 10am-3pm UK Time (excluding Bank Holidays) or email: help@magazinesdirect.com. Calls to 0330 numbers will be charged at no more than a national landline call, and may be included in your phone provider's call bundle.

WORDS: POLLY GLASS • PICTURES: TIM TRONCKOE

“LIFE IS SHORT. TIME IS NOT ENDLESS”

From the pandemic to her recent cancer surgery, the last few years have been a rollercoaster for Nightwish's Floor Jansen. Now, she's ready to embark on a brand-new chapter



It's Friday April 22, 2022 at Nokia Arena in Tampere, Finland. Fifteen thousand Nightwish fans await a much-delayed live taste of their heroes' ninth album, *Human. :II: Nature.*, released as the world shut down in 2020. Anticipation is high. The stage will soon be engulfed in enough fire to obliterate a small village. Aside from a handful of dates in Finland in 2021, this is Nightwish's first full-scale show in more than three years.

Backstage, Floor Jansen feels like death. In her stage armour she looks fearsome – a tattooed Boudica for the modern age. Such a gig wouldn't normally faze her. Floor, 41, has been fronting metal bands since she was 16. But just now she's come down with a virulent stomach flu at the worst possible time, and she's wondering how the hell she'll get through the next two hours onstage.

"It was unlike anything I've ever done," she says of the stomach flu that almost derailed that post-Covid comeback. "I mean, you get sick now and then, but this was brutal. I don't know what kind of virus I picked up, but it was a very violent one. I was up all night, and then I still had to travel from Berlin to Tampere. It was horrible." She shrugs. "But yeah, what can you do?"

It's not hard to see why Floor gets called a 'powerhouse'. Part opera singer, several parts rock star – with the dynamism of both – she exudes indestructibility. If Bruce Dickinson had a daughter with Xena: Warrior Princess, it would have been Floor.

But there are other sides to her: different personas that reveal a more complex, interesting picture of a 'powerhouse' lead singer. There's the animal-loving homebody. The thrillseeker. The proud vegetarian. The whiskey drinker. The metal icon with a solo pop album on the way. The Highly Sensitive Person, whose hyper-stimulated sense of the world shines through her performances. The person who, just three weeks before headlining Wembley Arena with Nightwish, underwent surgery for breast cancer.

"I'm always myself," she summarises, simply. "So whether I run around in jeans fixing a fence, or ride my horse, or go onstage in warrior outfits... it's all the same. It's just a different side, as you can see."

We meet Floor over Zoom in December, as she wrestles with dodgy wi-fi backstage in Milan. "Is it noisy for you, in the background?" she asks in perturbed Dutch tones. "It's basically one big open box here..."

Dark-eyed and slightly frazzled in a grey hoodie, Floor has a businesslike streak that softens as talk turns to things like her solo music, her bandmates and the cigars she enjoys with her husband, Sabaton drummer Hannes Van Dahl. On another day she might have come in from feeding the horses at her rural property on Sweden's west coast. You wouldn't fuck with her, but you'd gladly go for a drink with her.

Out on the road with Nightwish, there's a decent amount of the latter. The band "wobble" around Christmas markets drinking glühwein. They rate vegetarian food in Indian restaurants as part of a longstanding curry club. The shows themselves have been jubilant affairs. "Last night we were

**"WHEN YOU HAVE
A TUMOUR, YOU
JUST THINK,
'GET IT OUT'"**

Nightwish (left to right):
Jukka Koskinen, Emppu Vuorinen,
Tuomas Holopainen, Floor Jansen,
Kai Hahto, Troy Donockley





surprised with some bottles of champagne,” she grins, “which we then drank, and became very happy...”

It’s all so far removed from lingering notions of Nightwish as some sort of dictatorship or soap opera, with singers driven away by its founder’s maniacal demands. They seem like friends – as in, *actual* friends.

“It’s absolute genuine fun,” she nods. “We’ve always had that. And there are always ups and downs; it’s like a big marriage. But we’ve been longing for this tour a lot. Especially after the pandemic, we don’t take it for granted at all.”

For Floor, the isolation of lockdown reinforced her ties to the band, but it also kickstarted her solo work. She’d begun to think of it in 2019, following an appearance on Dutch TV show *Beste Zangers* (‘Best Singers’), but she was still very much a band person, with a new Nightwish album cycle around the corner.

Come March 2020, for the first time in her career, she found herself separated from that group mentality. She spent time with her husband and daughter, now five. She grew vegetables and looked after her horses, cats and enormous Irish wolfhound. She worked on her online profile, communicating with her fans on a regular, down-to-earth level.

At the same time, she began working with collaborators on solo material. An alternative, poppier sound started to brew. In spring 2022 she appeared on Germany’s *Beste Zangers* equivalent, *Sing Meinen Song*, for which she sang in German (one of the four languages she speaks in addition to Dutch, English and Swedish). Gradually, a standalone Floor Jansen was evolving.

“My desire from the get-go was to find a sound that fits with me, not something created around me. But how do you do that? So I used up a large part of the pandemic in a trial-and-error search for this sound.”

It wasn’t easy. Ten years of bringing Tuomas Holopainen’s visions to life had left her with phenomenal vocal skills, but limited songwriting practice. Her first ideas, she says, “weren’t that great”.

“I’ve done it [songwriting], but I haven’t been doing much in the last 10 years,” she admits. “Plus I’m in a band with someone like Tuomas. It makes me feel very small, like, ‘What do I have to add to a world full of music?’ So from that insecurity I had to find my way and accept that I am more limited, and that I have different ideas.”

Teaming up with Dutch producer Gordon Groothedde (Snoop Dogg; Katie Melua; Floor’s previous band, After Forever) was a turning point. The first song they wrote together was *Fire*. A darkly atmospheric, orchestral swirl of intelligent modern pop, with the grandeur of Florence & The Machine’s cover of 1986 dance hit *You’ve Got The Love*, it ignited Floor’s confidence as a creator in her own right.

“I have a really hard time with love songs,” she says. “I know the majority of pop music is about love songs, and that’s also why I find it boring to listen to. So I wanted to create something that still has a message.”

Accordingly, her solo album, *Paragon*, shuns frothy clichés in favour of meatier subjects. *Fire* is about returning to life after lockdown. One song, *Invincible*, was written for the injured war veterans at Prince Harry’s Invictus Games – originally planned to take place in 2020 in the Hague until the pandemic got in the way.

“It’s inspired by the idea of being physically or mentally wounded, after you’ve just given everything you have,” she explains, “and something that’s left of you has to pick up life, and recover from something that you never really

wanted to recover from. I want to raise awareness of the fact that this happens so incredibly often, but also to empower them. Like, ‘You already went through Hell, now you’re on your way back, you are invincible.’”

It’s hard to hear this story now without thinking of Floor’s recent health issues. Diagnosed in October 2022 at a routine mammogram screening, her breast cancer came as a total shock – two weeks before Nightwish were due to fly to South America.

“They [the doctors] said, ‘We want you to come back.’ And the thing I thought, in my naïve brain, was, ‘Oh, they fucked up something with the pictures.’ Never, ‘Oh, they found something.’” She shakes her head. “Not a single moment. Until I was there.”

Surgery was planned for the day after they came home. Until then, she says, the intense business of touring Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Mexico proved a good distraction. The pace of it all was brutal but helpful, and reading similar stories from her fans made her feel less alone – “But at the same time, it’s an overwhelming awareness of how many people actually got this fucking disease.”

“I put my emotions into the music,” she reasons, “and also had really wonderful conversations within the band, crew, management, everyone has really been there for me. It’s very tough to do it all that fast, but at the same time it helped because I didn’t have to walk around with thoughts of it too long. Because as soon as you know you have a tumour in your body, the only thing you can think of is ‘get it out’.

The whole mental aspect of a cancer diagnosis is shit.”

Back at home, she had three weeks after her operation before heading out in Europe and the UK. Scarred, bruised and exhausted, she was grateful for the support of her family. “Jesus, how I underestimated it,” she half-laughs, of the recovery

process. “I was jetlagged, I barely slept for nights after the surgery because my system was completely upside-down, you get morphine... So everyone’s been really having my back in this.”

Just a couple of days before the Wembley gig, she learned that the operation was successful. It was both a relief and a wake-up call. In Sweden, mammogram screenings start for women at the age of 40. In the Netherlands, her birthplace – and in the UK – it’s 50. Now looked up to by many, as a public figure as well as a musician, she’s determined to persuade more women to go for their scans.

“On a purely personal level it’s a bit weird, because I’m just me,” she says, of her role-model status. “But from this position, I have the power to make a difference every now and then. I wanted to make sure it has this function by saying, ‘Go and get your mammogram done.’ If I had stayed in the Netherlands, this entire thing would have gone undetected. It was so small when they took it out, but it was growing, you know? I’m very lucky.”

Cancer casts a pervasive shadow, even when it’s caught quickly. For Floor, who (when we speak to her) still has three weeks of radiation therapy to complete, it’s realigned her priorities.

“It’s not like I think ‘I’m gonna die’ all the time,” she explains, “but I realise how life is short. Time is not endless. We have it now.”

To that end, Floor is making the most of 2023. After her radiotherapy is finally over, she’ll join Nightwish for 70000Tons Of Metal in the Bahamas. Festival shows will

“A POWERFUL WOMAN IS IN TOUCH WITH HER EMOTIONS”

Floor: finding strength
through vulnerability

FLOOR SHOW

The life and times of Floor Jansen

1981

Born in Goirle, the Netherlands.

1997

Joins Apocalypse, later to change their name to After Forever.

1999

Begins studying music at the Dutch Rock Academy. Enters the Conservatorium Tilburg three years later.

2009

Disbands After Forever and forms ReVamp, who release their self-titled debut album the following year.

2011

Suffers 'burnout', a form of depression. "I couldn't sing, I had a breakdown every time I tried," she later said.

2012

Plays first show with Nightwish in Seattle on October 1, just two days after the departure of previous vocalist Anette Olzon. Announced as Nightwish's permanent singer the following year.

2013

Duets with original Nightwish singer Tarja Turunen on a live cover of Gary Moore's *Over The Hills And Far Away*. "We are sisters in metal," she later says of their friendship.

2015

Makes recorded debut with Nightwish on *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*. Writes an open letter to fans denying she is "an arrogant bitch" following abusive comments aimed at her online.

2016

Calls Slayer "a dreadful band" during a light-hearted interview with *Metal Hammer*, causing an inevitable furore online.

2017

Gives birth to daughter Freja.

2018

Releases debut album by side-project Northward, originally started a decade earlier.

2019

Appears on Dutch reality TV show *Beste Zangers* ('Best Singers'), and performs the Andrew Lloyd Webber song *The Phantom Of The Opera*.

2022

Reveals that she's been diagnosed with breast cancer. Subsequently announces that she is "cancer free" following surgery.

2023

Set to release her debut album, *Paragon*, on March 24.



Touring is a vital part of Floor's happiness



follow. In the summer the band will head to the Röskeä campsite in Kitee, Finland, to record the next Nightwish album (which will be released at some point in 2024). Part three of a trilogy that began with *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* and continued through *Human. :II: Nature.*, the new album will return to themes concerning our planet and our mortality. Sonically, Floor suggests, we can expect a heavy palette.

"I would say it's a pretty heavy album," she muses, "but once again, it's the multicolour diversity that is Nightwish. It's all there. It's going to once again take you by the hand through beautiful stories – whether they are stories from this Earth or stories about this Earth. They're beautiful."

Creatively, Nightwish is still Tuomas's brainchild, though there's a sense of collaboration around this record. Armed with his demos, the band have been working up different parts and exchanging ideas on tour – in hotel rooms and dressing rooms across the world. For Floor, this has been a happy arrangement.

"I think Tuomas has a unique view on the world and has a unique way of putting that into words," she says, "and I think he's outdone himself on that end once again. And also visually, the ideas that are bubbling are going to be of a next level. So yeah, there's lots to look forward to."

Meanwhile, along with the release of *Paragon*, she has solo gigs planned in Europe. "And of course it would be wonderful to go to the UK," she adds, "we are working on that as well."

If all goes to plan, Floor Jansen could be a name that reaches well beyond metal circles – paving the way for a new kind of pop star with a darker heart. Once again the 'powerhouse' label feels apt, with all the truths and misconceptions that come with it.

"Power is often connected to, especially women..." she searches for the words, "...it's like, 'powerful women are

"I HAVE A HARD TIME WITH LOVE SONGS"

bitches', you know? Maybe that's the misconception of the century. But a powerful woman is also a woman who is in touch with her emotions, and one who can have absolute soft sides and embrace them. The idea that high sensitivity would be a weakness? That is actually the absolute misperception.

"And that goes for men, too: for men to be in touch with their feelings and to be able to communicate them... that is a bigger strength than [makes growling, macho noise]. That's going to bring us a whole lot further."

Between travels, Floor will recharge at home in the Swedish countryside. On cold evenings, she and Hannes sometimes retreat to their grillhouse, light the fire and relax over single malts and a cigar – things that bonded them when they first met on tour with Iced Earth. Small connections between worlds.

"I can say that my happiest place is home, but that's not true because after half a year I'll claw up the walls," she laughs. "I can say it's on tour, but after a month I really want to go home. I can say it's onstage, but then putting my daughter to bed is equally amazing at times. The ultimate thing is to have the luxury of both." ■

NIGHTWISH'S *HUMAN. :II: NATURE. TOUR EDITION* IS OUT NOW VIA NUCLEAR BLAST. THE BAND ARE WORKING ON A NEW RECORD, DUE SOMETIME IN 2024. FLOOR'S SOLO ALBUM, *PARAGON*, IS DUE FOR RELEASE ON MARCH 24

THE VERY BEST OF THE ULTIMATE METAL MAGAZINE!

Celebrate the best in metal with this collection from the last 12 months of Metal Hammer. Packed with awesome interviews and behind the scenes with some of the biggest acts in metal, the last year has been like no other, so what are you waiting for?!



Ordering is easy. Go online at:

magazinesdirect.com

Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

NIGHTWISH



WORDS: POLLY GLASS • PICTURES: TIM TRONCKOE

BITTER SWEET SYMPHONIES

Tuomas Holopainen says Nightwish's albums are his "children". So naturally we asked him to rank them from worst to best, because we're cruel like that...

From fantastical realms to elaborate filmic sagas and love-letters to Darwinism, the Nightwish discography is rich in intrigue – and low on dull moments. As its central creator, Tuomas Holopainen is inextricably bound to the sounds, feelings and memories that saturate each of these nine albums. His life is in this music. But if it came to it, in a castaway situation, which albums would he most (and least) want to be stuck with? It's a tough call. "They are my children," he pleads, "how would they feel if they saw the ranking? *Wishmaster* would be so sad!"

Still, he *did* manage to settle on an order, and here it is.



9. WISHMASTER
(Spinefarm, 2000)

Tuomas: "It went to No.1 in Finland, but to me *Wishmaster* is one of those albums that was kind of 'in-between'. It doesn't stand out to me on a personal level. There was nothing revolutionary about it

after [1998's] *Oceanborn*. It was made in a really good spirit – everybody in the band was happy after the success of *Oceanborn* – so this was just a natural continuation of that. But it didn't really introduce anything spectacularly new for me personally. I think that's my problem with it. If I had to pick a favourite song, I think I'd pick *Dead Boy's Poem*; lyrically, it's very much in the essence of Nightwish."



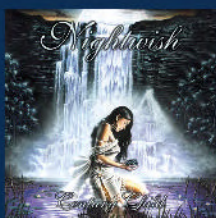
8. ANGELS FALL FIRST
(Spinefarm, 1997)

Tuomas: "Our debut sounds so innocent because it was done as a demo. It was never supposed to be released, but we sent it to the record label and they said, 'Let's put this out!' It still has my parents'

home address on the booklet.

"When I founded Nightwish in July 1996, I just wanted to do moody acoustic music. Since me and Emppu [Vuorinen, guitars] had a strong metal background, it was a natural transition to do something heavier, but that original acoustic band idea can be heard strongly. We couldn't find anybody to sing, so I kind of dug a hole and fell into it myself. We played *Elvenpath* years later on the Decades tour, and I can't understand how Floor was able to keep a straight face singing those lyrics – to her credit, she did! I just remember the kid that I was back then, writing those songs, and I kind of miss that kid, because it was all about Donald Duck and fantasy books and snowmen and things fantastical.

"*Nymphomaniac Fantasia*? Not my proudest moment. But it was done because there was a young kid who had some, I don't know... issues, ha ha ha! Love-life gone wrong or something. It was a different time."



7. CENTURY CHILD
(Spinefarm, 2002)

Tuomas: "After *Wishmaster*, I seriously considered quitting the band, especially thanks to the departure of the [original] bass player [Sami Vänskä] and my slight burnout. Then I went on a hiking

trip in Lapland with Tony Kakko from Sonata Arctica, and he talked me over that.

"We needed a new bass player, and we needed management because until then it was me and Jukka [Nevalainen] the drummer taking care of the business side. So we got management, and we got Marko [Hietala, bassist/singer until 2021], who was already a big name in Finnish metal – we were all big fans.

"There was a lot of bad stuff happening in the band as well – that's reflected on the album. *Slaying The Dreamer* was a way to get rid of all that frustration. Artistically I found film music, Hans Zimmer above all, and that really can be heard on *Century Child*. But the album didn't take us much on the next level. Artistically it did, but not commercially."



6. DARK PASSION PLAY
(Nuclear Blast, 2007)

Tuomas: "It was a really easy album to write because all the emotions were there so strongly, after what happened with Tarja [Turunen, original vocalist who was dismissed from the band in 2005], and

everything in my personal life. I was about to lose my mental health, and then doing the songs for this album saved it.

"I'm a very private person, but I write about some really personal things, and these people – Anette [Olzon], for this record – are singing it out for the whole world to hear. I needed to do a song like *The Poet And The Pendulum*, where I killed myself in the lyrics; I had to do it for my mental health, and it ended up being a wonderful piece of music."



5. IMAGINAERUM
(Nuclear Blast, 2011)

Tuomas: "Again, this was a pretty easy album to write – we all had a good time with it. When it comes to songwriting, I'm a morning person. I'll wake up about six when I'm at home, then a litre of coffee

and I'm off. Usually I'm done by two or three o'clock. I write songs upstairs in my little home studio – just a keyboard and a lakeside view. In the studio with the band, the other members and the engineers are more night owls. Also in the tour bus it's always me up first, making coffee downstairs.

"It was clear from the start that this would end up being a film. We thought, 'What haven't we done yet? Let's do a music video for every song on the album, and then somehow combine them to become this really weird film.' It's a very optimistic album. It just puts a big smile on your face."



4. ONCE
(Nuclear Blast, 2004)

Tuomas: "One of the best times that this band has ever had was 2003–2004, making the *Once* album, and the first part of the tour after that.

In late 2003 we flew to London to record the orchestras. I rang the studio doorbell and Rick Wakeman opened the door. I think I said, 'Errr... [makes incoherent starstruck noise] Thanks!' We went to the studio, started playing *Ghost Love Score* and my face melted. Like, 'I'm next to Wembley, listening to the orchestra playing a song that I wrote, this is really life at its best.'

"Something happened with that album – all the stars were aligned. I remember looking at the album charts and seeing 'Nightwish, Michael Jackson, Anastasia' and going 'Really?!' I don't think any of us were quite prepared. You get sucked into this massive world of big tours and worship from the fans, then the money starts to flow in, and it's easy to

Nightwish: from "moody acoustic music" to arenas

“RICHARD DAWKINS SAID, ‘ARE YOU MUSICIANS OR SOMETHING?’”



lose your perspective. Impulse purchases? I did a round-the-world trip on my own, it was wonderful. But money has very little meaning to me.”



3. OCEANBORN (Spinefarm, 1998)

Tuomas: “Our ambition went through the roof after *Angels Fall First*, because we all realised that this is actually really fun. I was studying biology, Tarja was studying singing, I think in Germany, Jukka was studying

to be a computer engineer, Emppu was working in a carpet factory. Music was just a hobby. And then we realised, ‘There’s something going on here, so let’s put all the focus in Nightwish for maybe a few years, and see what happens.’ It was eight hours every day in the rehearsal room, playing the songs and just really feeling it. It was the watershed album for us, it took us to the next level.

“All the guys, we had just gotten out of the army so we all had short hair, we had no idea about the metal scene at all. We were complete countryside hickies who just happened to like metal music, and we were given this chance to show what we could do with a three-album deal. It shouldn’t have worked on paper, but somehow it did.”

Buzzing! Tuomas needs a good litre of coffee before he starts each day. We can relate



2. ENDLESS FORMS MOST BEAUTIFUL (Nuclear Blast, 2015)

Tuomas: "If Floor hadn't come along, I think that would have been the end of the band. We got over an ugly divorce once [with Tarja], then again with Anette, then Floor comes along and everything shines bright again. She learned the setlist in 48 hours – when I called her, she was at her sister's wedding. Even from the first show the fans embraced her. So we took a lot of that good feeling for *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* [named after a line from Charles Darwin's *On The Origin Of Species*].

"We went to Röske campsite in Finland to record. It's a four-hectare area by a lake in the middle of nowhere, belonging to the Boy Scouts. We stayed for three months. Every morning we'd rehearse for a few hours, have lunch, go back, rehearse and then spend the evening with each other by a campfire, barbecuing, playing acoustic guitar, singing, going to the sauna and talking about the songs all the time. *The Greatest Show On Earth*, that's the Nightwish desert island song. I'm sure we'll play that at the end of the setlist until forever.

"We recorded Richard Dawkins' part in Oxford. He's quite the character. I'm a huge fan, so I was really starstruck. He did his parts beautifully, it was over in about 30 minutes and then he gave us a ride back to central Oxford in his Tesla. And halfway back he asks us, 'So are you musicians or something?' Ha ha! So his head's somewhere... all the time! But he's a wonderful guy."

"NYMPHOMANIAC FANTASIA? NOT MY PROUDEST MOMENT"



1. HUMAN. :II: NATURE. (Nuclear Blast, 2020)

Tuomas: "I immediately knew after *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* that 'OK, we have to do more songs about this.' And so the idea of *Human. :II: Nature.* was first to have songs about humankind, and then

you play the other CD and relax and go into nature. My memories of making the album are of happy times, no conflicts. We returned to Röske to make it.

"When the pandemic hit, it was like, 'Should we postpone the release?' But it was all printed and the advertisements had gone out to the papers. So the record label said, 'Let's go with it. Maybe people will have more time to concentrate on it...'

"Noise was a big single, but there's also something about *Shoemaker* [named after famed geologist/astronomer Eugene Shoemaker]. It's on the artsy side, but not in a pretentious way.

"Realising what evolution is... it's about realising our mortality, at least for me. And it's made all the difference. When I kind of realised that this is very likely the only life we're gonna have – it's only after that that I started hugging my dad. I never hugged my dad before that. I've just felt much more liberated and in the light ever since." ■

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

TOGETHER WE'RE
LOUDERSOUND.COM

X

Y

Z

THE HOME OF
ROCK
HAMMER
PROG
RUES

BEYOND THE BLACK



WORDS: CATHERINE MORRIS

THE NEW BLACK

Beyond The Black might just be symphonic metal's next megastars. Fronted by former pop star and magician's assistant Jennifer Haben, they're determined to bring you under their spell

In the early 2000s, at corporate parties in Germany, nine-year-old Jennifer Haben could be seen belting out Whitney Houston's *I Will Always Love You* and AC/DC's *Back In Black*, backed by her brother and some schoolmates. Word had got around that the kids were entertaining and they were booked solid. "People wanted to see a super-, super-young band playing covers!" she laughs, still somewhat bewildered.

Today, she fronts rising German symphonic metallers Beyond The Black. Since forming in 2014, they've opened for Scorpions and Within Temptation, played Wacken, have charted in their home country and have just released their fifth album. Their devoted fans are affectionately called 'Ravens' like the goth version of Swifties or Deadheads, and their live show is excellent – having eschewed tropes like the overlong orchestral intro track, they let the irresistible melodies of their songs speak for themselves.

At the heart of it all, smiling her dimpled grin and singing at the top of her lungs, is the 27-year-old, flame-haired Jennifer. Onstage, she revels in the theatricality of a costume reveal, turning her short black dress into a long red one in one fluid movement – a nod to her love of cosplay and a stint as a magician's assistant (yes, really) in her youth.

"I've been a musician all my life, and I think that's what I'm supposed to do," she beams.

Born in a small town in Saarland, southwestern Germany, into a music-loving family, Jennifer got a taste for performing at the age of four, when she sang a German song in church with a children's choir (an anomaly: "We weren't super-religious," she explains). Five years later, she formed that first band.

With her mother acting as manager, her father in charge of sound and her brother playing bass, Jennifer enlisted some of her classmates to play at a party, and soon her 'family band' was performing nationwide. It sounds like a lot for a young girl who was, by her own admission, painfully shy, but Jennifer always found it infinitely easier to sing in front of a crowd than to speak – something she's been reflecting on recently.

"PEOPLE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY I WAS IN A METAL BAND"

JENNIFER HABEN

"I saw a video from when I was young," she says wistfully, "and you can see that I was so comfortable singing onstage, not nervous at all. But when people used to ask me my name or something, I just did this..." She smiles blankly, like she's been asked a question in a language she doesn't understand, before breaking into a giggle at her own timidity. "It took me two years to start to say 'thank you' onstage when people were clapping," she confesses. "Two years!"

Despite her reticence to speak in public, Jennifer's love for singing and her desire to do it for a living was such that she threw herself into every opportunity that came her way. "I never said no to anything. I could make so many mistakes when I was talking, but with singing, it's hard to be wrong when you know all the words. So whenever I got the chance to sing, I wanted to."

Being a yes-woman took Jennifer far, from winning talent shows to signing her first record deal with the German-language all-girl pop group Saphir ('Sapphire') at age 14. But for someone who liked rock music and singing in



Beyond The Black (left to right): Tobi Lodes, Kai Tschierschky, Jennifer Haben, Chris Hermsdörfer

English, it didn't feel right. She cringes a little at the memory. "Musically, it was not the best fit."

You might think all this early fame would make somebody a little... starry, but, speaking to *Hammer* over Zoom, Jennifer appears completely down to earth, with a warm and sunny disposition. Far from the shy girl she describes in her youth, she chats with ease and unpretentiousness, her feet up on a chair, her dyed scarlet hair long and loose around her shoulders. She speaks expressively, using her hands, and laughs often at herself when recounting her teen and childhood years – "I was *not* a rebel," she emphasises. She's fully aware her life has been *different*, yet she seems remarkably grounded, something she attributes to her parents, who monitored her commitments and, much to Jennifer's relief, made sure she was only locked into her contract with Saphir for a year.

"I had to skip school, sometimes for weeks," she reflects. "I'd come back and would've lost my best friend. That was the hardest thing about it." She pauses a moment, then collects herself. "But in the end, I was always into being a musician. I always felt most alive when I was singing."

Mixing bombastic melodies, fist-pumping choruses, key changes and choral chants with an urgent sense of melodrama, Jennifer formed Beyond The Black at age 20. Though she's a self-professed fan of Evanescence and Within Temptation, she says she wasn't trying to emulate those bands.

"I don't think I knew that I was doing symphonic metal when I was doing it – I was just combining all the elements that I loved," she muses. "At first, a lot of people didn't understand why I was in this genre. Our first show was at Wacken; that's not normal. People thought, 'How is this possible?' And the metal community, they need you to convince them that you really want to be a part of it."

After the release of their debut, 2015's *Songs Of Love And Death*, Beyond The Black seemed poised for success – they charted in Germany and Austria, and appeared on morning



TV. But the following year all of Jennifer's bandmates left, leaving her alone to rebuild.

"That was a hard time," she sighs. "After a year or two, we had these talks about, 'OK, what's happening here?' I was ready to risk everything, to do everything [to take the band to the next level professionally], and that's not what they wanted to do. I thought we were on the same wavelength, but there was miscommunication. If I had communicated better, maybe it would have been different."

Contrary to negative opinions shared online about the split – particularly about Jennifer – she's keen to point out it wasn't acrimonious. "We liked each other very much," she stresses. "It was so much harder because of that. They told me, 'We don't want to stand in your way.'"

For Jennifer, there was never any question about continuing as Beyond The Black. "It was my baby. I wasn't ready to rename it. I said, 'Let's try again with other people.'"

Their current line-up has been stable since 2016, they've just moved labels from Napalm to Nuclear Blast, and their fifth album is self-titled – an indication that they're intent on making a definitive statement. Jennifer feels Beyond The Black's time has arrived.

"It's a new start," she says. "The album is telling the story of Beyond The Black. There are four themes we always focus on. We have love all the time and we have loss all the time. Then there's humility, and also battle – with ourselves, for ourselves, or for others. That's what we were playing around with. It feels confident, like we know exactly how we want to sound. We've found our true selves."

While Jennifer's hopeful the record will be a turning point in the band's career, it's clear that as long as she can sing for people, she'll be fulfilled. This afternoon, several months on, she's still buzzing from last autumn's co-headline tour with Swedes Amaranthe. "It was the best we've ever played," she enthuses. "It was the best feeling to be onstage again. Everyone was so happy. You could feel it in the air." **H**

BEYOND THE BLACK IS OUT NOW VIA NUCLEAR BLAST

BEYOND THE BLACK

Jennifer frequently goes above and beyond (the black) to cosplay



PLAY DATE

When she's not busy with the band, Jennifer cosplays. These are some of her favourite looks



WEDNESDAY ADDAMS

"I'm wearing some scary white contact lenses that we also used in our *Winter Is Coming* video. They not only look as if you're blind, you really can't see anything through them, so

people had to guide me all the time – and could make fun of me. And I didn't know it 'til I saw the photos afterwards!"



SALLY

"I really love *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, so I was excited to do this Sally cosplay for Halloween. I made the dress myself and I think the make-up took me almost

four hours, with arms and legs. It wasn't really comfortable, but I never complain about that when it comes to cosplay looks."



BILLY/SNOW WHITE

"I wanted to create a female version of Billy, the puppet from *Saw*, so I thought it could be interesting to combine Billy and Snow White. Since I already had the wig for her, and the

lenses from a previous costume, this was an easy, minimum-consumption costume."



YOUNG-HEE/THE DOLL

"The *Squid Game* hype got me! Since my brother and his friends wanted to dress as the players, I thought it would be fun to complete one of the games with the giant puppet.

I created my costume from fabric and a shirt that I had. The giant contact lenses were new and it took me forever to get them into my eyes."

THE GIGS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Ozzy Osbourne and Tony Iommi,
our founding fathers



THE GIGS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

From the moment when metal was born to the shows that launched the genre's biggest superstars, these are the 10 most landmark concerts ever

WORDS:
ALEC CHILLINGWORTH
DAVE EVERLEY,
MATT MILLS,
JONATHAN SELZER

ENTRANCE
2

SECTION
B

ROW
5

SEAT
10

ENTRANCE
2

SECTION
B



METAL IS INVENTED!

BLACK SABBATH

Where: The Pokey Hole, Lichfield, UK

When: August 1, 1969

Black Sabbath had plenty of gigs under their belts by the summer of 1969, but their appearance at West Midlands blues club The Pokey Hole was momentous for one reason: it was the first time they played an ominous new song they'd written – *Black Sabbath*. Literally, nothing would be the same again.

GEEZER BUTLER: “The first time I knew we were onto something special was when we wrote the song *Black Sabbath*. I’d seen King Crimson and they used to do Holst’s *Planets Suite*, the Mars bit. It sounded really ominous. I started messing

about with it on bass one day, and I don’t know if it got stuck in Tony’s head, but he picked up his guitar and started playing the riff. I thought, ‘Yeah, that’s what we want.’

“A couple of nights later, we had a gig at this blues club in Lichfield. We had a bit of a following – we used to do 12 bar blues stuff, which went down well. People were ordering drinks and stuff, and we thought, ‘Let’s do that song we just wrote.’

“That was the first time we ever played *Black Sabbath*. The whole place went, ‘What on earth is this?!’ It was nuts. The crowd went mental. I thought, ‘Fucking hell, we’re onto something.’” ▶

NWOBHM IS BORN

SAMSON / IRON MAIDEN / ANGEL WITCH

Where: Music Machine, London, UK

WHEN: MAY 8, 1979

It was a defining moment in the annals of rock: the birth of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. Three bands – Angel Witch, Iron Maiden and Samson – making a spectacular re-emergence after years of punk rock oppression, planting their flag in a gloomy old ballroom at the end of Camden high street.

The gig had been put on by Neal Kay, who ran London rock club the Heavy Metal Soundhouse and believed metal was about to undergo a street-level resurgence. Legendary journalist Geoff Barton was there, reporting on the gig for weekly music mag *Sounds*. He was snippy about Angel Witch, entertained by Samson and moderately impressed by the middle-of-the-bill Maiden.

But it wasn't so much what happened onstage that made the gig so important – it was what it stood for. This was the point where UK metal marked out its territory. Things began to snowball. The phrase 'New Wave Of British Heavy Metal' would soon be plastered across the music press and beyond, revitalising the genre for the coming decade. NWOBHM itself would be over and done in a couple of years, but its legacy echoes today.



Iron Maiden: they've not done too badly for themselves in the years since, to be fair

Magic in the air: Donington's humble beginnings



THE OG ROCK FESTIVAL ARRIVES

MONSTERS OF ROCK

Where: Castle Donington Racetrack, Derby, UK

WHEN: AUGUST 16, 1980

A late-summer Saturday in 1980 saw around 40,000 denim-clad longhairs gather in a field in the East Midlands to witness an event that would play a huge part in shaping the decade to come: the inaugural Monsters Of Rock. Headlined by Rainbow and featuring a supporting cast that included Scorpions, Judas Priest and Saxon, it was the first of the great heavy metal festivals – one whose spirit lives on in Download, Wacken and countless similar events today.

BIFF BYFORD (SAXON): "It was the heavy metal Woodstock. Maurice Jones [the festival's co-founder] was a friend of ours. He liked the band so he put us on.

"By that point, we'd probably sold about 100,000 records, but in a weird way I think we felt like the underdogs because all the other bands had been putting out records for longer than us. It was our first festival gig. But we went into it with the attitude of, 'This is the new generation of heavy metal – let's fucking have it!'

"I would imagine that 99% of the people in the audience that day had got [Saxon's most recent album] *Wheels Of Steel*. The roar when we went out onstage was incredible. We played for half an hour – maybe a bit longer – and it just flew by. When I walked offstage, I thought, 'Follow that!' That was a fucking great gig. We even wrote a song about the day, [1981's] *And The Bands Played On*."



BAY AREA THRASH KICKS OFF

METALLICA / EXODUS

Where: *The Old Waldorf, San Francisco, USA*

WHEN: NOVEMBER 29, 1982

'The maniacs return!' screamed the flyer advertising Metallica's third-ever San Francisco show. Appetites had been well and truly whetted via previous support slots with Bitch and Laaz Rockit, but this was the band's first headlining gig in the city and they were about to detonate a 100 megaton bomb under the Bay Area.

The first glimmerings of what would become the thrash scene were already in evidence thanks to local heroes Exodus, who opened the Old Waldorf show. But this was Metallica's night – San Francisco was already their spiritual home, and they ripped the town a new one with their 11-song set.

Metallica played another SF show the following night, then headed back to Los Angeles. The next time they returned was as conquering heroes in March 1983. By then they had a new bassist named Cliff Burton, a sense of blazing ambition and a future that was theirs for the taking.

METALLICA RIPPED SAN FRANCISCO A NEW ONE

Metallica staked their claim on San Fran, and when Cliff joined them a few months later, there was no stopping them



Exodus were local heroes in San Francisco in 1982

Headlining the Marquee?
So easy... so fucking easy



THE COURSE OF 80s ROCK CHANGES

GUNS N' ROSES

Where: Marquee, London, UK

WHEN: JUNE 19, 1987

In the summer of 1987, Guns N' Roses were just another glam metal band kicking around Hollywood's Sunset Strip, albeit a feral one. Then they landed in London for a run of three shows at fabled Soho sweatbox the Marquee. The buzz the gigs created fed back Stateside, providing the perfect launchpad for the soon-to-be-released *Appetite For Destruction* and sealing their mythology as rock'n'roll's newest bad boys. The rest is history.

TOBY JEPSON (EX-LITTLE ANGELS/CURRENT WAYWARD SONS FRONTMAN): "Between April and September 1987, Little Angels played the Marquee pretty much every Sunday. We got a phone call saying, 'You've been offered a show with this band called Guns N' Roses.' We went, 'Who's that?!', because they'd only done the *Live ?!** @ *Like A Suicide* EP. I went into my local record store and the guy behind the counter went, 'Oh my

**"THEY WERE THE
GREATEST BAND
I'D EVER SEEN LIVE
– SO EXCITING"**

TOBY JEPSON, EX-LITTLE ANGELS FRONTMAN

god! They're amazing!' He played *It's So Easy* and I thought, 'This is gonna be killer!'

"When we got to the Marquee, we walked into this scene that I remember so vividly: there was a fistfight going on between two of GN'R's roadies. At the same time, Slash was onstage with six Marshalls and shouting at his sound man, 'I can't hear it!' Steven Adler came over and said to Dave Hopper, our drummer, 'Hey man, I love this ride cymbal!' He was going, 'Rock'n'roll is like war! You gotta get your Kalashnikov and load it with platinum bullets!', and giving it all that. He must have been on something.

"Our show got a reasonable reception, so we thought, 'We've blown these fuckers away!' Then Guns N' Roses played; only for 50 minutes, but it changed me completely. I knew none of the songs but, by the end of each one, I was singing the chorus. They played pretty much everything on *Appetite For Destruction*. They were the greatest band I'd ever seen live; they were the most exciting example of what rock'n'roll should be, because they were totally authentic.

"After the show, I knocked on Guns N' Roses' dressing room door and Axl Rose answered. He took me to the bar and was a straightforward and decent guy. I asked, 'How did you get that good?', and he said, 'We rehearse and rehearse and rehearse, and we do not come out of that rehearsal room until we know we have the songs.' They went back to America and it all kicked off big time from there."

Mayhem hogged the limelight from the off

BLACK METAL CATCHES FIRE

MAYHEM

Where: Folkets Hus, Jessheim, Norway

WHEN: FEBRUARY 3, 1990

In the late 80s, the Norwegian underground was a tiny, disparate scene. Darkthrone were a death metal band, Mayhem had released one EP of raw, filth-encrusted thrash. But in a small venue north-east of Oslo in February 1990, a transformative spark was about to ignite, as Mayhem gave birth to the incendiary black metal movement.

JØRN INGE TUNSBERG (EX-IMMORTAL/CURRENT VATHR GUITARIST): "I first met [late Mayhem guitarist] Euronymous after a Slayer gig in late '88. Me and [Immortal guitarist/vocalist] Demonaz kept in touch and visited him back in Oslo. He said Mayhem were going to be playing about 40 minutes outside the city, so we went back to see the concert. We didn't know anyone else at the gig, although I met Ivar [Enger] from Darkthrone at a party afterwards, and I later heard Faust from Emperor was there.

"The gig was something brand new, for everyone. Mayhem weren't having fun onstage, they were actually living and breathing this. It was amateur, but really creepy. And Euronymous and [late vocalist] Dead's corpsepaint made the atmosphere even darker. I remember Dead was throwing intestines from a pig, and one of the body parts hit my neck. I was using it as a scarf. He also cut himself with a bottle. I thought it was an accident, but then I saw he was licking the blood. I had blood in my face, dancing around with these body parts from a pig, like, 'What the fuck am I doing?' but it was like you've discovered levels of yourself you didn't know you had.

"Me and Demonaz talked about it every day afterwards. We started to seek out black metal bands – Darkthrone went from death to black metal and then we heard Emperor. I was in Immortal for their first year and it changed everything, from playing guitar to how to act onstage. On our second gig, Abbath changed his vocals from growls to screams. We felt we were going into something else, something new.

"For me, that gig was an epiphany. I didn't know what to expect, but looking back, it was the birth of everything. It's stuff you never forget."

THE ALTERNATIVE NATION LAUNCHES

LOLLAPALOOZA

Where: Compton Terrace, Chandler, Arizona, USA

WHEN: JULY 18, 1991

'A beautiful monster' is how Jane's Addiction frontman Perry Farrell describes Lollapalooza, the touring festival-cum-travelling circus he co-founded. Conceived as the band's farewell tour, it smashed down the dividing walls of the early 90s music scene and changed the face of the entire decade in the process.

Jane's themselves topped a bill that included a pre-superstardom Nine Inch Nails, Rollins Band, Living Colour, Ice-T (both solo and with Body Count) and goth icons Siouxsie And The Banshees. It was a groundbreaking line-up musically and culturally, embodying the nascent alternative scene, and laying the groundwork for the success of Nirvana's *Nevermind*, released just a couple of months later.

It was an unexpected commercial success, too. Suddenly, the travelling summer festival – an

alien concept in America to that point – was part of the landscape. Its DNA seeded Ozzfest, the Warped Tour and countless other similar events that followed. Lollapalooza itself ran out of steam in 1997, at which point Perry (temporarily) called time on it. It didn't matter. Its job was done.

THE FESTIVAL SMASHED THE DIVIDING WALLS OF THE 90s SCENE

Perry Farrell's beautiful monster was so much more than just a farewell tour



THE GIGS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

METAL GOES ORCHESTRAL!

METALLICA

Where: Berkeley Community Theatre, Berkeley, California, USA

WHEN: APRIL 21-22, 1999

Metallica weren't the first rock band to team up with an orchestra for a live show – Lars Ulrich's beloved Deep Purple did it back in 1969. But the two magnificent gigs they played with the San Francisco Symphony under the banner S&M ('Symphony & Metallica', geddit?) opened the floodgates for every other metal band on the planet to rope in a string section and make like Ludwig van Beethoven.

JEREMY CONSTANT (S&M CONCERTMASTER):

"A concertmaster is basically the leader of the first violins, very much a go-between between the conductor and the orchestra. I have to confess, I was not a big metalhead [before the S&M concerts], although I was and still am a classic rock fan. I believe it was a project [late Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra] Michael Kamen instigated. We as an orchestra only heard about it when it was decided and scheduled. They decided to make it a voluntary gig, but people signed up because there was a fairly strong feeling of adventure: 'We have no idea what this is going to be like!' And Metallica are local legends!"

"The first rehearsal was without the band. We were basically making sure the [orchestral] parts worked, but Kamen knew what he was doing. He knew how to rehearse an orchestra and – with all of his studio, movie and TV experience – how to generate parts very quickly. The next rehearsal was us with the band. They were deferring to Kamen's expertise in terms of working with an orchestra, which I was impressed with. They were professional and collaborated, which gave us a great sense of, 'OK, everybody here is an expert at what they do.' It was very reassuring.



S&M was so well-received, Metallica did it again 20 years later with S&M2

"There weren't nerves on the day, but there was some curiosity and concern. It was a new thing for us to be in front of 3,000 screaming metalheads! I had never seen people bashing their heads on the side of the stage before! Ha ha! So there was relief and pride once we were done. It was nice that it was recorded; many years afterward, I was eating with friends in New York and the waiter went, 'Metallica! S&M!' It stoked my vanity. Ha ha ha!"

"There was very little socialising with Metallica in 1999, but Kirk Hammett sought me out [during S&M2]. He found out that I was playing a Stradivarius [a 300-year-old violin] and wanted to talk about valuable instruments with me. James was very accessible and we see Lars around the symphony even now – I think working with us made him curious about what we do. And, now that my ear's attuned to them, I can go back to Metallica's music and appreciate that they make really well-crafted and well-put-together songs."

21ST-CENTURY METAL STARTS HERE

SLIPKNOT

Where: Coral Sky Amphitheatre, West Palm Beach, Florida, USA

WHEN: MAY 27, 1999

Slipknot didn't come out of nowhere – it just felt like it. Their game-changing debut album was still a month away when the little-known Iowan nine-piece appeared on Ozzfest's second stage in May 1999, but so immediate and incendiary was the impact that they were all anyone was talking about. By the end of the tour, their status as metal's newest superstars was assured.

MONTE CONNER (FORMER ROADRUNNER A&R MAN): "Slipknot started Ozzfest with nobody knowing who the fuck they were. By the time it was over, they were the band everybody was talking about. Picture it: they're on the side stage, you've never heard of this band and you see nine maniacs come out onstage in jumpsuits and just kill it. And it wasn't just the image; they had the songs to back it up. It was insane!"

"Clown had a decomposing crow in a glass jar. I saw it. He'd huff it before going out to get in that fucking mindset. He said he'd throw up in his mask and that would drive his vibe. I know that he and [then-percussionist] Chris Fehn used to beat the crap out of each other too – or, knowing Clown, I'd say he beat the shit out of Chris. Ha ha ha!"

"The debut wasn't out during Ozzfest but it took off like a rocket, so Ozzfest had an immediate reaction. Looking back over my career, the highest-selling record I ever had a hand in was Slipknot. They are one of the only bands that could make a record, then disappear for five years and come back bigger. They're just a phenomenon."



Slipknot huffed dead crows and gave birth to Maggots on Ozzfest

Rammstein's Till Lindemann:
not one for subtlety

PYRO BECOMES A BIG(GER) DEAL

RAMMSTEIN

Where: *Les Arènes de Nîmes, France*

WHEN: JULY 23, 2005

Fire! Segways! More fire! The penultimate show of Rammstein's *Reise, Reise* tour was recorded for their *Völkerball* DVD, released the following year. Given the Berliners disappeared until 2009, this document became the g $\ddot{u}$ lden standard for all bands to strive towards – that is, until Rammstein one-upped themselves upon their return.

The look: dirty, lederhosened, blending into the harsh industrial backdrop. The props: more maniacal than ever, keyboardist boiled alive in a pot, a circus of flesh and fire oompahed to 24,000 punters. The music: unscrupulously heavy, pegging the word 'compromise' into the soil. *Völkerball* was a testament to taking things too far, its rumblings still felt today.

Any Ghost gig post-*Prequelle* isn't Maiden-worship, it's this. Even Sabaton's gung-ho, Geronimo show pays more homage to Germany than it does Bruce's boys. The intricate set design, the outfits, treating the stage as an extra instrument... that's all Rammstein at Nîmes. **H**

VÖLKERBALL WAS A TESTAMENT TO TAKING THINGS TOO FAR

GETTY



MONSTERS, INC

Epic songs, Satanic Panics and real-life
Eddie Munsons – this is the story of
metal's decades-long love affair with
Dungeons & Dragons

WORDS: CHRIS CHANTLER

S

tranger Things got plenty of 80s phenomena bang on, but the one that struck the most authentic chord was undoubtedly the iconic but relatable figure of Eddie Munson. As well as playing guitar in high school metal band Corroded Coffin (and introducing new generations to the evil-bat-distracting powers of *Master Of Puppets*), Eddie was also Dungeon Master for his school's

Dungeons & Dragons club.

Heavy metal and this venerable tabletop role-playing game have grown up together over the last 50 years, flourishing in intimate sync, fandoms frequently overlapping. However, in Eddie these twin pursuits intersected in a celebrated pop-cultural hero, the like of which we'd never seen before.

"Eddie was everyone's favourite," says Crow Lotus, singer with Louisiana metallic hardcore crew Capra and a lifelong role-playing game enthusiast. "Not necessarily all metal fans are into fantasy RPGs, but you'd be hard-pressed to find an RPG fan who isn't into metal."

Dungeons & Dragons – D&D to aficionados – has phased in and out of broader culture over the decades, but it's most definitely having a moment right now. The D&D-infused *Stranger Things* will be followed in April by *Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves*, a big-budget movie starring *Star Trek*'s Chris Pine and *The Fast And The Furious*'s Michelle Rodriguez, with a spin-off TV show to follow.

But metal's love affair with D&D has never faded, with innumerable musicians outing themselves as gamers. "I do love Dungeons & Dragons," Rage Against The Machine guitarist Tom Morello told *Metal Hammer* back in 2017, while Jack Black, Chester Bennington and My Chemical Romance singer Gerard Way also expressed their love of the game, helping D&D attain cooler cultural capital than previous generations could have imagined.

"There does seem to be some commonality with the greater metal community," says Mark Garrett, singer with prog-deathcore bruisers Kardashev and devoted D&D Dungeon Master. He reflects on the connections between disciplines: "There's a measurable affinity for fantasy, sci-fi and escapism. If you look at a lot of metal lyrics, you see a lot of fantasy stories – oftentimes very gritty ones."

Heavy metal and fantasy RPGs emerged contemporaneously. Just as Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin were honing their hairy chops in the early 70s, Chicagoan hobbyist Gary Gygax was envisioning a new kind of tabletop wargaming system, where players led by a Dungeon Master ('DM') assume the roles of mythical beings to embark upon epic, otherworldly adventures. Both incipient cultures took crucial inspiration from J.R.R. Tolkien – Sabbath's Gandalfian *The Wizard* and Zep's trips to Mordor came just as Gary was welcoming hobbits and elves into his medieval wargame's 'fantasy supplement' circa 1970.

Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson finally launched Dungeons & Dragons in 1974, but the game expanded, toughened and codified its core concept from 1977 with Advanced D&D – just as Judas Priest, Motörhead and the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal started doing much the same for the headbanging community. For many youngsters who'd just discovered HM, discovering D&D felt like another level of the same concept – the game for metalheads who want to live inside their favourite record sleeves and lyrics.

"My dad was born in 1938, so his rock'n'roll was Chuck Berry," says Luke Gygax, son of Gary Gygax. "Classical, jazz and blues were probably influential to him, but the younger



Capra's Crow Lotus has been on a D&D quest for most of her life



Kardashev's Mark Garrett is another fan of all things dungeony and dragony

players who became game designers were more influenced by metal. A little bit of Sabbath would have snuck in there as an influence, as well as Yes, Rush and the early 80s stuff that told wonderful stories, like Iron Maiden – they had great stories."

Luke remains indebted to Papa Gygax – who passed away in 2008 – for his introduction to the latter band. "My dad went to a UK convention and brought back *The Number Of The Beast* single for me. He'd heard it was cool and he thought I'd like it – and of course I did! My friends and I enjoyed Iron Maiden when we were gaming, and I still try to see them on every tour. They're still fantastic."

The overlap between heavy metal and D&D became further entrenched during the 80s, when enthusiasm for either marked you out as a total dweebo at best or, at worst, a flat-out Devil-worshipper. The so-called 'Satanic Panic' saw an increasingly hysterical religious right accusing both metal and RPGs of leading youngsters into Satanism.

"Lots of religious groups picked it up: 'Your children are not safe, this game is teaching them how to worship demons and throw spells.' So a lot of kids had their books seized and burnt," says Luke. "But that made D&D dangerous, and for

Stranger Things' Eddie Munson (Joseph Quinn) was instrumental in spreading the gospel on Netflix



“CLIFF BURTON INTRODUCED METALLICA TO D&D WHEN THEY WERE A YOUNG BAND”

LUKE GYGAX

rebellious young men it was like, ‘I’m going to find out what this is because I’m told I shouldn’t.’”

Similar accusations were made against Ozzy Osbourne, Iron Maiden, Slayer and Judas Priest, with identical results. “With that whole Satanic Panic thing, metal and D&D got dragged through the mud together,” says Kardashev’s Mark Garrett. “They were considered ‘outcast’ things to do, which I don’t think they are anymore, but when you get two communities with a common enemy it’s like you’re in this together. There must have been some camaraderie there.”

With RPGs perceived as nerdy and eccentric, it’s unsurprising that few musicians openly declared enthusiasm for D&D back then. In the late 80s, a bunch of stoner kids from Palm Desert, California changed their name from Katzenjammer to Kyuss. Their new moniker came from an undead creature in D&D handbook *Monster Manual*, even though they weren’t hardcore gamers.

“We used to read it and look at the pictures and figure out how the game was played,” drummer Brant Bjork told alternative newspaper *Vue Weekly* in 2018, adding that “it was too sophisticated for us”.

Behind the scenes, though, dice were rolling even in the coolest dressing rooms. Luke reveals that his friend and fellow player Joe Manganiello – now a Hollywood actor currently directing the first official D&D documentary – went backstage at a Metallica show for an interview with Kirk Hammett.

“They played D&D,” says Luke. “I guess Cliff Burton was a little older than them, and he introduced them to D&D when they were travelling as a young band. Same with Anthrax: Scott Ian is a D&D player. Metallica and Anthrax were some of my favourite bands in high school, I still put them on to this day, and they’re D&D players.”

Metal and D&D weathered the brickbats lobbed at them through the 80s, but in the 90s even the counterculture pivoted against them. With the alternative scenes trending toward themes of urban aggression and real-world trauma, dragon-slaying was firmly off the agenda, castigated as the juvenile excesses of a previous generation. It wasn’t until Canadian trad metal revivalists 3 Inches Of Blood emerged in the early 2000s that we saw a band actively proclaim their D&D participation.

“I like the idea of music being escapist fiction,” singer Jamie Hooper told *Metal Underground* in 2007. “I hate

writing songs about how shitty your day was... Fuck that. I'd rather go off into a dream world. And, yes, we do play Dungeons & Dragons and we're not ashamed to admit it."

Happily, nobody's ashamed to admit it anymore. During lockdown, Capra's Crow Lotus and Kardashev's Mark Garrett took part in a livestreamed D&D campaign with members of fellow Metal Blade bands Allegaeon and Cult Of Lilith.

"Our DM was amazing, nobody half-assed it, and we were all in it to have a really good time," says Crow.

Some bands aren't content to simply broadcast their participation - they're bringing the game into the music. The Black Dahlia Murder released a limited box set of 2020's *Verminous* album that included an original D&D module based on the title track and cover ("I played a lot of D&D in my formative years, and I feel like its imagery led me to discovering metal music," much-missed vocalist Trevor Strnad told EN World). Indiana heshers Throne Of Iron take the biscuit, using a bespoke 'Roll For Metal' process whereby "tempo, feel and drum parts are picked using a standard D&D dice set".

For Mark Garrett, there's a direct connection between fronting a band and running a D&D campaign. "The whole process of writing lyrics and coming up with an aesthetic for an album is very similar to what I do in Dungeons & Dragons," he says. "I try to write something that is immersive, that draws the listener into a specific state of mind, and that's what a lot of DMs try to do: 'How can I successfully manipulate my players on an emotional level?'"

And the inspiration is two-way. Stefan Leblanc, Creative Art Director for Tuque Games, summed up the aesthetic of new D&D universe videogame *Dark Alliance* on the PlayStation website: "We're heavy metal," he declared. "Think of the look of heavy metal album covers."

"FANTASY IS OBSERVING THE REAL WORLD THROUGH A BIZARRE LENS"

KARDASHEV'S MARK GARRETT

Chris Pine and his team of ragtag adventurers in the upcoming D&D movie



It's not hard to see the join. At the heart of both metal and D&D is the idea of transcending mundanity, losing yourself in a world of wild, intense imagination, making sense of chaos and becoming something infinitely more powerful than yourself.

"I think that's the crux, potentially the most important thing," says Mark. "Why not take it to the limit, explore fantastical realms and use those to talk about the world? Because in a way, when we engage in fantasy, we're kind of observing the real world through a bizarre lens."

As we navigate our confusing, conflicted current predicament, we need an immersive source of magical escapism if we want to stay sane. No wonder the Venn diagram intersection of dice-throwers and rock'n'rollers gets bigger every day. **M**

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: HONOR AMONG THIEVES IS IN CINEMAS FROM APRIL 7

FANTASTIC BEATS

Eleven D&D-indebted bangers to soundtrack your next tabletop campaign

CLUTCH

24 Earth Years (1998)
'Back in 1980, we played AD&D [Advanced D&D],' testifies Neil Fallon on this line from *The Elephant Riders* sessions, adding, 'My character was baffling, a druid wizard halfling.'

VISIGOTH

Dungeon Master (2015)
A rollicking trad metal paean to every good D&D MC: 'Take a chance, roll the dice, is this Hell or paradise? In this land of high adventure, carve your fate!'

MORGION

The Serpentine Scrolls/Descent To Arawn (1999)
Stately, lumbering doom-death from Orange

County, Morgion took their name and album title *Solinari* from D&D. Clearly they were all over it: Arawn is God of the Dead in AD&D.

NIGHTWISH

Wishmaster (2000)
This stirring title track is a nostalgic flight through storytelling legend, gliding us over Middle-Earth to the universe of D&D module offshoot *Dragonlance*, where Silvara and Starbreeze dwell.

BLIND GUARDIAN

The Soulforged (2002)
The German power metal kings held an online fan poll to determine the topic for a new song. The winner

was *Dragonlance*, because of course it was.

SOULSPELL

Dungeons & Dragons (2017)
A trifle on-the-nose, perhaps, but these savvy power metal whizz-kids got Rhapsody frontman Fabio Lione to be Dungeon Master on this grandiloquent love letter to the RPG.

RED FANG

Endless Sea (2022)
With this roving and enigmatic rumble, these Portland stoners hold the metal end up on *Spelljams*, the strikingly eclectic soundtrack album for a 2022 D&D campaign

called *Spelljammer: Adventures In Space*.

GYGAX

Dice Throwers & Rock N' Rollers (2018)
Virtually a D&D tribute band, named after the game's creator Gary, Ventura rockers Gygax set about unifying 'Shield bearers and denim wearers' with this exuberant and highly infectious anthem.

ORCRYPT

Dice & Damnation (2020)
'Reap the consequences of our Gygaxian pact,' gargles Ewigkeit/ex-In The Woods multi-instrumentalist Mr Fog on this grim slice of D&D-obsessed UK black

metal, taken from the LP *Balrog & Roll*.

PROBOT FEAT.

JACK BLACK I Am The Warlock (2004)
JB is an out-and-proud D&D nut, so it's easy to imagine he's lording his Warlock class over fellow adventurers on this highlight from Dave Grohl's labour-of-love Probot LP.

SUMMONING THE LICH

Cult Of Ophidian (2021)
Sludgy blackened deathcore from these Missouri obsessives who have a cool reputation for inter-band gaming, and whose debut, *United In Chaos*, was a fully fledged D&D universe concept album.

METAL HAMMER

METAL HAMMER

**METAL GEAR.
SOLID.**

VISIT: [BIT.LY/HAMMERTEES](https://bit.ly/HAMMERTEES)

EXCLUSIVE, QUALITY MERCH. ORIGINAL AND OFFICIAL.



THE HAMMER INTERVIEW

DANNY ELFMAN

He's the goth-theme daddy whose compositions soundtracked a generation of macabre Tim Burton classics – and that's before we get started on *that* Coachella performance. We chat to a living legend

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN • PICTURES: JONATHAN WILLIAMSON

DANNY ELEMAN



Danny Elfman is giving us a video tour of his studio – a vast loft filled with marimbas, vibraphones and assorted drums, watched over by 18th and 19th-century wax medical models and old dolls/movie figurines housed inside glass domes.

“These toys are very dangerous, so they have their special protective domes that keep them from getting out and creating havoc!” he confides with a glint in his eye, showing us close-ups with his phone.

It’s a very Danny Elfman display. The 69-year-old musician and composer is renowned for his work with director and fellow oddball Tim Burton, for whom he has scored countless movies including *Batman*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and recent *Addams Family* spin-off *Wednesday*, though his most famous work is *The Simpsons*’ theme.

He got his start at age 18, when he joined his brother Richard in French theatrical troupe Le Grand Magic Circus, playing the violin. Back in LA, he joined Richard’s performance group, The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo, later reforming it as the rock band Oingo Boingo. His big scoring break came when Tim Burton asked him to work on *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure* (1985), kickstarting a partnership that endures today.

In June 2021, 37 years after his debut solo album, *So-Lo*, Danny released follow-up *Big Mess*. Last year’s remix record, *Bigger. Messier*, featured metal royalty such as Trent Reznor, Health and Ghostemane. In April 2022, shirtless and tattooed, he played a career-spanning, headline-making set at Coachella, which included a rendition of *The Simpsons* theme in front of an orchestra.

Warm and smiling beneath a shock of ginger hair, Danny is both self-deprecating and way more modest than a musician of his stature has a right to be. “I’m just a hyperactive, OCD musical chameleon with too much adrenaline and not enough time,” he says with a laugh.

What was the first song you ever wrote?

“A piece of music for Le Grand Magic Circus in Paris. I’d only been playing violin five months, but they hired me... I guess I didn’t have to be that good! Ha ha ha! The first piece of music I wrote for the Mystic Knights was called *The Cheddaranian National Anthem*, for this mythological planet of Cheddarania. It was all brass instruments and drums. For my brother and his pals, anything good was considered ‘ched’, or ‘cheddar’, and the planet of Cheddarania was a particularly fine place to be.”

How would you describe Oingo Boingo to a member of Gen Z?

“I couldn’t describe it then, and I don’t know how to describe it now. It wasn’t a punk band, and it wasn’t a pop band, and it wasn’t a new wave band. But we were called all of those things by different people. We inhabited some weird world between these three genres, I suppose, because we never could figure it out.”

Were you mixing with the punk and hardcore scene that was happening in LA in the early 80s?

“When I started the band, I was already like an old man. I was 27. And so it was like, ‘Oh, well I can’t be a punk, I’m old.’ I had bands that I really admired – X was my favourite LA band. I ran into Lee Ving from Fear a couple of times. We would play with Wall Of Voodoo, Suburban Lawns, and with incarnations of the Red Hot Chili Peppers before they were the Chili Peppers, and after.

“Some of the last shows we did when we were playing bigger venues, we’d have the Chili Peppers open for us. And that was crazy, because the audience would boo and boo,

and of course Flea would just encourage it and flash his ass. I thought it was great, and I remember thinking, ‘Every one of you kids, you’re going to be huge fans of this group in another two years, and you just don’t know it yet, because they’re gonna be huge.’ And sure enough they were.”

You ended Oingo Boingo in ’95. What happened?

“It was a combination of several things. As soon as the 90s started, I already wanted out. And also, starting in ’85, I began scoring films. I was destroying my ears – especially once we started getting into the slightly bigger halls, 5- or 6,000-seat places, and the audience would be making so much noise. But almost more to the point, I was frustrated just being in a band. Bands tour for six months a year. We would go on the road for six weeks, and at the end of six weeks, I’d wanna shoot myself.”

Tim Burton was a fan of Oingo Boingo, but how did you two meet?

“I started with an incredibly lucky break, because I had two people – Paul Reubens, who played Pee-wee Herman, and Tim Burton, who was the director – and my name was recognisable for both of them. Five, six years earlier I did a weird, cult movie for my brother called *Forbidden Zone*, and Paul loved *Forbidden Zone*. He made a note: ‘Whoever that guy is, I’m gonna use him someday.’ And Tim knew of Oingo Boingo. And so, I guess between the two of them, they were like, ‘Oh, OK, let’s bring this guy in.’ And I didn’t meet with Paul, I only met with Tim, but we just hit it off.”

What did you bond over?

“We both grew up in Los Angeles, on horror films. We were both monster kids, really. And I think we were both kinda maybe odd kids. I understand Tim’s characters. They’re all alienated. And I grew up feeling like that. So I think that’s part of what breeds a kinship.

“I used to feel when I was younger that I came from some other planet, and was still watching and learning human behavioural interaction. So it was easy for me to understand Pee-wee Herman, and Edward

Scissorhands, and Jack Skellington, and both Batman and the Joker. I’m Lydia and I’m Beetlejuice, somewhere in my character. I’m Lydia when I’m going through life, and then when I’m onstage, I’m Beetlejuice.”

“WHEN I’M ONSTAGE, I’M BEETLEJUICE”

At what point did you think, ‘I’m actually good at composing soundtracks’?

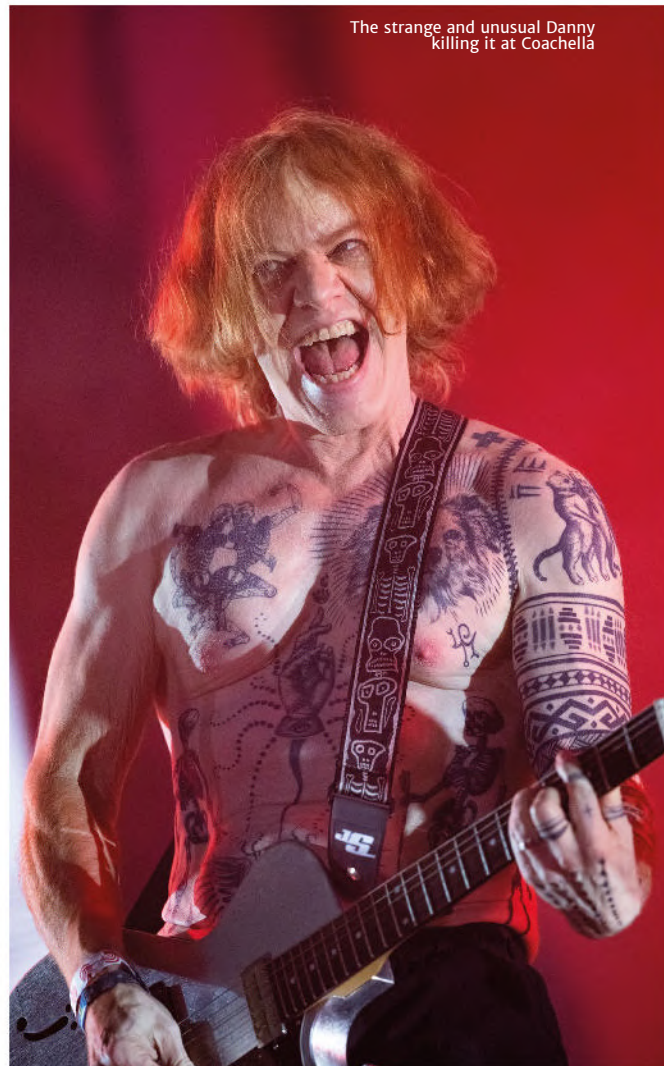
“The best thing coming out of that era – the late 70s, into the early 80s – was a total ‘fuck you’ about everything. And that served me well, because I went into *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure* going, ‘It doesn’t matter. I’ll do the thing, it’ll be good experience, Warner Brothers will throw it out, and fuck them.’ So I had an attitude for sure, which didn’t always serve me well. But, ultimately, it allowed me to develop my own voice and not care how I was perceived in my field.”

Was there a moment when the insecurity went away?

“Well, it really kind of started right away. When I heard *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure* played back with the orchestra, I was hooked, because I had never heard an orchestra play in my life. I made the mistake of admitting, really early on, that I was self-taught. And so it was just, ‘Clearly he has somebody else writing his music.’ It took about 20, 25 films for that to dissipate slowly. I think



New wave rockers Oingo Boingo in 1981



The strange and unusual Danny killing it at Coachella

that's why I started breaking into classical music in the last 10 years. I wanted again to break into a world that didn't want me there. It's almost like I want to break into a party that I'm not invited to, and that everyone's gonna kick me out of."

Speaking of that 'fuck-you' attitude, everybody loved your Coachella performance last year...

"Oh my god. I *really* felt insecure about what I was doing there. The moment before I walked out onstage that first weekend, I felt like I was walking out to a firing squad. And it really wasn't until I got offstage that my manager goes, 'Hey, look at all these Tweets and stuff,' and it's like, 'What? They liked it?' I couldn't even tell. There was just a point, about a third of the way in, exactly where I took my shirt off, where I decided, 'I'm just gonna do this how I used to, because this is exactly how I was in the 90s.' And feeling raw and exposed. If I could, if I was bolder, I'd be butt-naked, you know?"

I think people were quite shocked to see you had so many tattoos – was that your intention? To make a statement?

"I wasn't expecting to *shock* people, necessarily, but for anybody who saw me 30 years ago, they're gonna go, 'Whoa, you know what I mean? But I've been doing it for a while. I started tattooing 35 years ago, and I intended to do my right leg and my left arm, and I just never finished. And then about eight years ago, I remember saying, 'You know what? I gotta finish this up.' Every quarter-century or so, you've gotta finish old projects. Like cleaning your closet, reorganising your garage, finishing your tattoos..."

"I made a conscious effort to be in as good as or better shape than when I left in 1995, because there was no way I was gonna go out and be Elvis, in front of my old fans, and come back with an extra 70 pounds on me."

What was your first tattoo?

"It was my leg, and I had designs for my arm, and I just got busy, and didn't finish it. So, fortunately it was all black ink. My tastes didn't really change from where I was in the 90s. I'm very OCD about the symmetry. Whenever I'm recording, I'm scribbling black squiggles and black geometric shapes. And so eventually I just started taking that, and putting it on me. And then because I'm a fan – as you can see with the stuff with the 18th and 19th-century

anatomical figures – I started putting those things out of old anomaly books, on me."

What do you mean by anomaly books?

"The skeletons that are on me are from this artist in the 18th century that did these anatomical drawings but he would take his skeletons and his corpses, and put them in whimsical shapes, and I loved that attitude about death. These dancing skeletons."

You collaborated with Trent Reznor on your songs *True* and *Native Intelligence* on remix album *Bigger*. Messier. How did you and Trent get to know each other?

"Well, I'd only met Trent once at a film composer event. After *Big Mess*, Stu Brooks, my bass player, was saying, 'Danny, would you be open to remixes?' And I'd go, 'No one's gonna wanna fucking do my shit, who's gonna wanna work with me?' Stu said, 'Would you mind if I sent some tracks to Trent?' I said, 'No, I'm too embarrassed.' And he did anyhow, and the next thing I know, Trent is saying, 'Well, send over stems, and let me fuck around for a little bit.' And I'm like, 'Really?!' Not only is he a fucking genius and amazing in so many ways, but he's a real generous person in my mind."

What did you and Ghostemane get up to? Did you hang out?

"Yeah, he came out to LA, and we hung out and took some pictures, and did some emailing, and he was just really sweet. I have a picture of him and I, and I said, 'It looks like kind of father/son.' And he goes, 'Oh well, you know, I'm honoured to have you as my dad! Ha ha ha!'"

What's this? What's this?
It's Tim Burton and Danny
Elfman during the making of
The Nightmare Before Christmas



“IF I WAS BOLDER, I’D PERFORM BUTT-NAKED”

A lot of people would have gone to big artists like Pharrell or Calvin Harris. What makes you attracted to these arty people?

“It wouldn’t even occur to me to send the track to Pharrell or God knows who else to work on it. My own tastes are probably a little more extreme than it appeared in the 90s, from Oingo Boingo, which is probably another thing that was frustrating me. It’s like, I’m listening to Nine Inch Nails, I’m listening to Tool – stuff that’s just a whole other kind of music that I don’t do. I don’t have a voice for it. It was fun, coming out in 2020 [with *Big Mess*] and finding a new voice to work with. Because I hadn’t sung, other than Jack Skellington, in 28 years.”

Wednesday blew up recently. Why do you think it’s been so successful?

“I have no idea why anything is successful. I think it’s just a combination of the tone, the setting and Jenna Ortega, who’s so fun to watch. Everybody feels some connection to *The Addams Family*, whether it be to the movie or the old TV show; there’s some kind of attraction to this macabre sensibility that’s just fun. I think with anything that catches on, it’s simply in the right place at the right time. Five years from now, it might not have been popular. If *Batman* had come out five years later, it might not have been noticed.”

Jenna’s prom dance went viral – what did you think of it?

“She was the fun of working on the show for me. I think she was perfectly cast, and she understood who Wednesday was, and so for her to do the choreography, it just made sense. She was like, ‘I know how Wednesday would dance, nobody needs to show me how Wednesday would dance.’ It’s like, ‘Of course you do, you’re Wednesday!’ I can’t give enough props to Jenna.”

Avenged Sevenfold have said you’re a huge influence on them. Do you know their music?

“Yeah, they’re great! But I hear stuff like this, and it’s just a constant shock to me. And when Trent told me he used to do an Oingo Boingo song called *Nothing To Fear* before he was in Nine Inch Nails, it’s like, ‘Really?! You’re fucking kidding me!’ I don’t feel like I had any impact on anybody, anywhere, and I just feel like a fucking freak in the world. And I’ve managed to find weird niches to live in as a freak.”

Do you think rock’s dead, or is it just something that people say?

“Well, let me put it this way: there’s not a lot of it. The reason why I was anxious to play Coachella in 2020 [it was postponed to 2022 due to Covid] is because Rage Against The Machine was playing. It’s like, ‘Fucking put me next to the stage where Rage is playing, because I feel more of a connection, just as a live band.’ And then when we appeared and Rage disappeared [the rap-metal band didn’t play the 2022 festival], I was like, ‘Nooooooo, don’t go, please!’ Ha ha ha! So, the fact is, it didn’t make any difference. But I still feel most at home with an electric guitar, and when I’m performing, I still like to perform very aggressively.”

Last question, and the most important one: is *The Nightmare Before Christmas* a Christmas movie or a Halloween movie?

“Ha ha ha! I still don’t know how to answer that! All I can say is that for me, personally, Halloween was always my favourite holiday of the year, as a kid, and Christmas was always a very depressing time. I was always alone and depressed. So for me, Halloween is where I feel my kinship. But it works for both holidays, you know?” **H**

BIG MESS AND BIGGER. MESSIER ARE OUT VIA ANTI- / EPITAPH RECORDS. DANNY’S LATEST SOUNDTRACKS ARE FOR NOAH BAUMBACH’S WHITE NOISE, MARVEL’S DOCTOR STRANGE IN THE MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS, AND NETFLIX’S WEDNESDAY. SEE MORE AT DANNYELFMAN.COM

For the stories behind the best albums and
the bands that produced them...

PROG

ASTOUNDING SOUNDS
AMAZING MUSIC

has it covered.



LATEST ISSUE ON SALE NOW



Follow us at www.progmagazine.com.
Order your copy at www.magazinesdirect.com/prg



BAD OMENS

GOOD Omens

How did Bad Omens transform from an average metalcore band into a fast-rising phenomenon? It's all thanks to pop music and better mental health, says frontman Noah Sebastian

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL • PICTURES: BRYAN KIRKS



W

hen Bad Omens frontman Noah Sebastian enters the Zoom chat, he's sitting in an empty backstage room of a music venue in

Massachusetts, wearing a black hoodie that all but envelops his skinny frame. We introduce ourselves and offer our gratitude to him for taking the time to talk to us. "No problem," he replies, as his eyes dart around the room.

There's really nothing to suggest it from our opening exchange, but this is a man who fronts a band that took metal by storm in 2022. Shy and unassuming he may be, but Noah Sebastian is a superstar in the making.

Last year was massive for Bad Omens. The Richmond, Virginia quartet went from being another bunch of modern metalcore also-rans to a breakthrough act. Much like Lorna Shore or Spiritbox, the groundswell of support for their third album, 2022's *The Death Of Peace Of Mind*, seemed to come from a grassroots level. Music fans, and lots of them, loved the record – and by the end of the year, the noise they were enthusiastically making about Bad Omens was impossible to ignore.

At time of going to press, three songs from last year's album have clocked up well over 20 million Spotify streams, and the official video for the title track has been viewed just shy of eight million times on YouTube. To put that into perspective, that's a few hundred thousand more than the video for recent Slipknot single *Yen* on the same platform. Bad Omens are a big deal.

"Initially, a lot of people didn't really get our new album, because there are a lot of pop influences on there," shrugs Noah, when we ask him to explain what it's been like to experience their rise. "But when you make an album that is as experimental as we did, it's not always going to capture people immediately. Our song *Just Pretend* just got picked up on TikTok, and it just sort of snowballed from there..."

Noah trails off somewhat as he tells us this. You get the feeling that he isn't quite sure how his band have been catapulted into this position, and, if we're totally honest, people who've only heard their first two albums might be wondering the same thing.

Bad Omens formed in 2015, released their self-titled debut in 2016, and followed it up three years later with *Finding God Before God Finds Me*. Both albums performed perfectly adequately, but hardly set the scene on fire. By contrast, *The Death Of Peace Of Mind* boasts huge tunes. There's the subdued electro throb of opener *Concrete Jungle*, the anthemic modern rock crunch of *Like A Villain* and the sexy industrial disco of *What Do You Want From Me?* – all of which could appeal to fans of massive mainstream guitar-pop artists such as Glass Animals, Tame Impala or even soul pop megastar The Weeknd, who are looking for something relatable but with more crunch. What prompted this astonishing transformation?

"We were too cautious and worried about what we were supposed to be doing back on those first two albums," Noah tells us. "I've said I wished *The Death Of Peace Of Mind* was our debut, because it's the first time we just did what we wanted to do. I don't know about you, but I get really frustrated by metal – not the music, but the attitude where unless you have a breakdown part in every song, it's not good music. If it's not heavy then it sucks."

The pop elements that have made *The Death Of Peace Of Mind* such a success come from a deep love of the genre. Artists such as The Weeknd and everyone's favourite slinky, new wave, Metallica tormentors The 1975 are mentioned as inspiration for the record.

"There is so much music from outside of metal that we are inspired by, and what really frustrates me is that some metal fans just call it all pop... like... there are so many different varieties of pop!" exclaims Noah, warming to the theme. "Just like there are so many subgenres of metal, it's the same thing! I want people to be more open-minded, and so we decided that we weren't going to stick to that formula anymore. And this is really the first time we've had the confidence to do that."

Noah's evolution as a vocalist has been one of the most startling aspects of Bad Omens' improvement. On early records he sounded like most metalcore vocalists, but this time around he challenged himself and believes he's now found his own voice.

"I used to just sit in those typical metalcore tropes," he remembers. "But I started to appreciate my own voice and then started singing in a more natural way. When I realised I liked it, I started to lean in on it. I realised I had a pretty decent natural falsetto and vibrato and all these things that are 'singer' attributes, not 'metal vocalist'

attributes. I thought, 'Wow! I'm kinda decent at that Post Malone vibrato or that Weeknd falsetto!' Those are the things that draw the ear to a song, finding those hooks.

"I just can't tell you how much more confidence I got as a singer and a songwriter," he continues. "It meant that I got to make the record I've always wanted to make."

"I HAVE A DECENT THE WEEKND FALSETTO!"

The word 'confidence' keeps coming up when we talk about *The Death Of Peace Of Mind*, although confidence doesn't seem to be something that Noah Sebastian is naturally blessed with. Don't get us wrong, he's a lovely young man – articulate, thoughtful, friendly, but also quiet, reserved and seemingly, initially at least, slightly unsure of himself.

It's understandable if you're aware of his history. Noah has previously hinted at the mental health struggles he faced in the aftermath of *Finding God Before God Finds Me*. It's a subject we broach, and he clearly feels even less comfortable talking about the situation than he does anything else we mention throughout our time together. But we're happy to say that he appears to be through the worst of it, and, despite the damaging clichés that would suggest otherwise, it's obvious that his improved mental health has improved the quality of his output.

"Yeah, that's the thing people always think, isn't it – the tortured artist makes the best art," he smirks. "That's absolutely not true in my case. I need to be happy, I need to feel like I can concentrate. If my mental health is hindering me, then I can't work. I'm not sure *The Death Of Peace Of Mind* would have come out the way it did without me getting into a better place."

Noah believes his excessive cannabis consumption, along with the long-lasting effects of traumatic events from his childhood – events that, as is his right, he doesn't want to go into detail about – contributed to a full-blown episode. This would result in him having panic attacks on the tour bus on his way to venues, or, even worse, he would get triggered by something while he was onstage, hampering him at the worst possible time.

Bad Omens (left to right):
Nicholas Ruffilo, Joakim
Karlsson, Nick Folio,
Noah Sebastian



HEY HEY, I WANNA BE A popstar

Bad Omens singer Noah Sebastian picks the pop albums that inspired latest release *The Death Of Peace Of Mind*

THE WEEKND *House Of Balloons* (2011)

"I can't even pick a favourite record of his, but I'll say *House Of Balloons* as it's the first one I heard. Vocally he has – and more so recently – some Michael Jackson in there. When I go back to this record I hear the influence, but he isn't quite leaning into it so much, and that's really cool."

AURORA
All My Demons Greeting Me As A Friend (2016)
"She's Norwegian. I don't wanna call it 'pop' as that gives people the wrong idea. It's like a peaceful, earthy, ambient kind of music, and she has cool vocal inflections that are ethereal and mystical. There was definitely some inspiration coming from her on this record."

SEVDALIZA
Ison (2017)
"I guess you could call it minimal, lo-fi, dark pop. Billie Eilish has mentioned her as an influence a lot. She's an Iranian artist and she makes really creeping, unsettling... sexy movie music? It's more like an art project than music. It's kind of pretentious. And I mean that in a good way!"

BILLIE EILISH
Happier Than Ever (2021)
"I've watched a lot of behind-the-scenes videos of Billie and her brother making stuff in their bedroom. They use Logic, like me and Joakim [Karlsson, Bad Omens guitarist], and it feels very much how we make our records. Sit in our room, find a cool sound, loop it, try to make a little vocal part..."

“CANNABIS BADLY AFFECTED ME”

“It’s weird. You think that you’re over something that happened years ago, and then it can just creep up on you,” he shrugs. “But I work on myself every day now. I eat better, I have worked on my physical fitness and diet. I know it sounds kind of trite to say the body is a temple, but it’s true for me. And people don’t think that cannabis is a ‘dangerous’ drug like some others, but it really badly affected me. The guys in the band have really helped and I feel like I’m in a much better place, but we always have to keep an eye on it. I would say to anyone: you need to keep checking on yourself to make sure you’re OK.”

Watching Noah quietly detail his troubles and his journey, it’s amazing to think we might be looking at the next iconic frontman – not just in metal, but maybe even in more

mainstream circles. Bad Omens certainly have the songs to do something similar to Bring Me The Horizon, surely the only other metal-adjacent band worth mentioning when it comes to breaking through the metalcore ceiling.

“I think Bring Me The Horizon are a big inspiration, yeah,” Noah says. “There’s no doubt they are the big breakout band from this scene. They are basically a genre all of their own now. They are exactly what they want to be. They can still write some really heavy songs, and that’s awesome – but then if they want to do a pop song, they do it. That’s so cool. If we could reach a place where we’re thought of in the same way, then that would be amazing.”

It’s not a crazy idea. If Bad Omens continue on this trajectory, Noah Sebastian might just be metal’s next crossover star. **H**

THE DEATH OF PEACE OF MIND IS OUT NOW VIA SUMERIAN. THE BAND TOUR THE UK FROM FEBRUARY 23

Bad Omens, now with a better peace of mind



THE FULL UNCENSORED STORY OF METAL'S MOST ICONIC BAND

Exclusive interviews with all the key band members, the inside story of their landmark albums, and access-all-areas reports from classic live shows – the complete, maggot-friendly history of Slipknot



**ON SALE
NOW**



Ordering is easy. Go online at:

magazinesdirect.com

Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

CAN I PLAY WITH MADNESS?

Yes, you can! As it's cold outside, we wanted to bring you some Iron Maiden activity fun. First colour Eddie in, and then try to find him in two awesome illustrations. Good luck!





THE OFFICIAL IRON MAIDEN COLOURING
BOOK - THE SINGLES IS AVAILABLE NOW
FROM ROCK 'N' ROLL COLOURING:
SEE EYESOREMERC.COM





IRON MAIDEN





IRON MAIDEN: WHERE IS EDDIE? IS PUBLISHED BY FANTOONS AND CAN BE PRE-ORDERED ON AMAZON FOR £19



★CLASSIC★ **Rock**

HIGH VOLTAGE ⚡ ROCK 'N' ROLL



www.classicrockmagazine.com



THE REVIEWS

98 **VOLBEAT**

Denmark's celebrated crowd-pleasers
return with strange bedfellows

88 **IN FLAMES**

Melodeath pioneers rekindle the old spirit

88 ALBUM REVIEWS

90 AVATAR

92 CODE ORANGE

93 DELAIN

96 MÅNESKIN

98 LIVE REVIEWS

100 BLEED FROM WITHIN

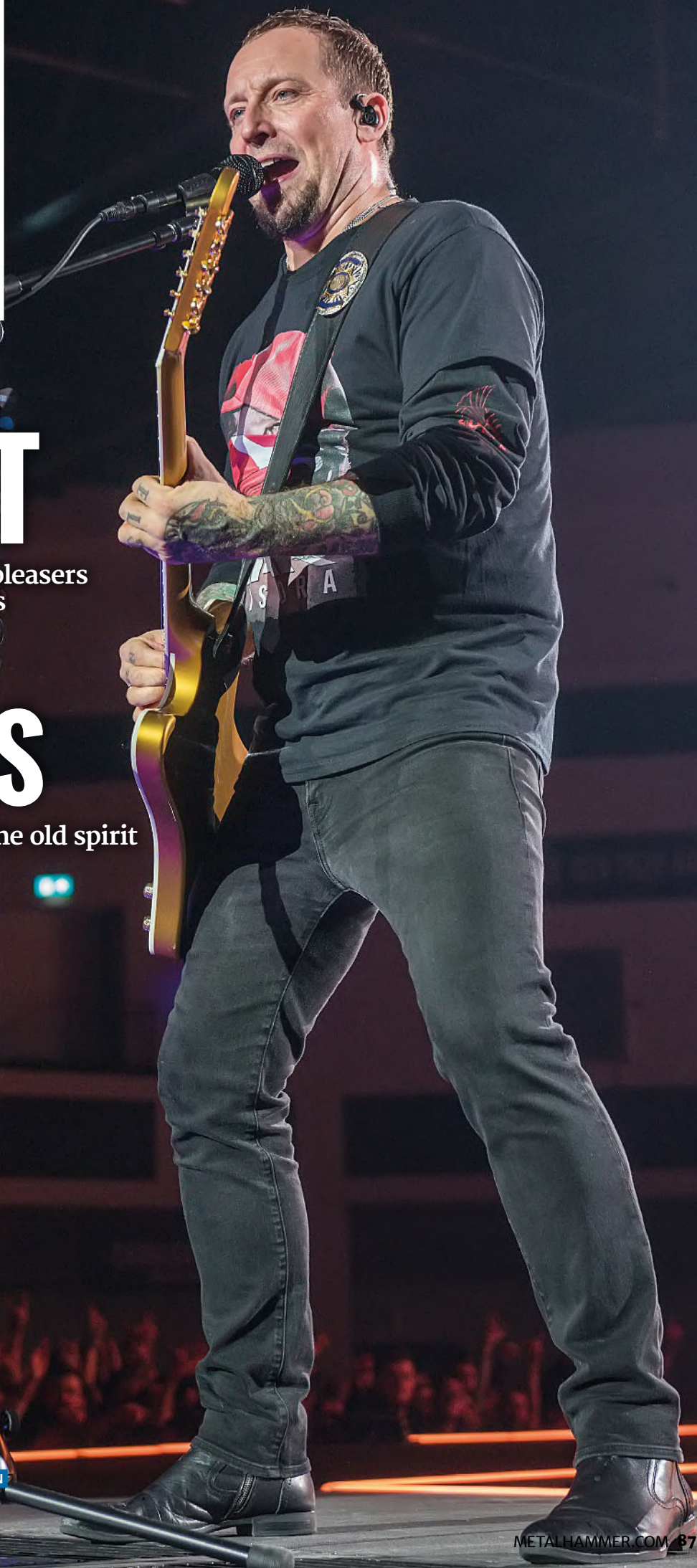
101 ORANGE GOBLIN

102 CLUTCH

103 ALTER BRIDGE

104 ANAAL NATHRAKH

EDITED BY: JONATHAN SELZER • PICTURE: DUNCAN EVERSON



In Flames are ready to restore their reputation



IN FLAMES

Foregone

NUCLEAR BLAST

Gothenburg's melodeath pioneers make their way back to their roots

FOR A BAND who are considered a genuinely classic metal act, the last decade has not been creatively bright for In Flames. With albums ranging from the dull (2014's *Siren Charms*), to the plodding (2019's *I, The Mask*), to the outright woeful (2016's *Battles*), they've spent way too long, in the words of cult UK comedian Stewart Lee, gradually

THE RETURN OF MEMORABLE HOOKS IS A REVELATION

decreasing the quality of their own obituary. It's been so long that fans could be forgiven for giving up on the idea of a glorious comeback. But if you've adopted that mindset, then hold up for a moment, because with 14th album *Foregone*, In Flames are definitely showing signs of recovery.

After a fairly forgettable instrumental acoustic guitar intro, first track proper, *State Of Slow Decay*, comes in on a stompy groove, before shooting straight into fifth gear as In Flames turn back the years with a *Clayman*-style melodeath riff, while

Anders Fridén bellows a hugely catchy chorus among some guttural barks. It's a promising start, which is then brilliantly built upon with *Meet Your Maker*. A stalking, snaking guitar line gives way to a bright, euphoric and instantly hummable chorus, which in turn is discarded for a flurry of double bass kicks and thrashing guitars. So far, so "Bloody hell! In Flames are back!" One of the strengths of In Flames at their best has been Anders' ability to pen a memorable hook. Those hooks have been glaringly absent for the last few albums, but here their return is something of a revelation. The chorus to *Bleeding Out* is just the most fantastic earworm – even if it





overshadows the rest of the song. The melodeath ballad *Pure Light Of Mind* is far from the band's finest moment musically, but Anders saves it from the skip button with a swaggering, chest-beating performance. It's a man-of-the-match display from a vocalist who had appeared to have lost his mojo, and it's great to hear him back on form.

It also helps that, where previous recent In Flames albums had guitars that felt pedestrian, compromised or phoned in, the arrival of former Megadeth and Nevermore man Chris Broderick as a full-time member has re-sharpened one of the most essential attacks the band have in their arsenal. The riffs on *The Great Deceiver* are sharper than the tip of a samurai sword, and on *Forgone Pt. 1* both Chris and Björn Gelotte

brilliantly duck, weave, pound and thrash along in awesome style.

It's not all perfect, however. *Cynosure* is pure filler, while *Forgone Pt. 2* is overwrought and plodding, making this more a *Through The Ashes Of Empires*-style album of promise to build on, rather than a *The Blackening*-esque full return to form. But, after what we've been given over the last decade, we'll take what is definitely In Flames' strongest album since 2008's *A Sense Of Purpose*, maybe even since 2006's much-loved *Come Clarity*. Whether the title refers to past glories or an inevitable creative turn, *Forgone* is a welcome surprise.

■■■■■■■■■■■
FOR FANS OF: The Halo Effect, At The Gates, Orbit Culture

STEPHEN HILL



THE ABBEY

Word Of Sin

SEASON OF MIST

Opulent hard rock and doom with a rich Finnish pedigree

Boasting a diverse pack of Finnish metal veterans, including founder Jesse Heikkinen (Hexvessel, Henget), *Word Of Sin* unveils a patchwork of 70s styles that rely less on the power of the riff than on compelling melodies and opulent arrangements. It's doom with powerful hard rock and progressive undertones. *Crystallion* and *Rat King* seamlessly shift from monolithic grooves into crystalline vocal harmonies that are more Laurel Canyon than Coven. Stacked with thundering walls of retro riffs and creeping atonal vocals, *A Thousand Dead Witches* and *Desert Temple* recall early Ghost without the kitschy Satanic pageantry. There's a confidence and sophistication here that underscore the pedigrees behind these compositions that grow catchier with each spin.

■■■■■■■■■■■

FOR FANS OF: Windhand, Pallbearer, Alice In Chains

JOE DALY



ALL OUT WAR

Celestial Rot

TRANSLATION LOSS

New York's metalcore veterans ramp up the good fight

It's crazy to think these metalcore staples have been going for over 30 years, and yet they sound fresher and more ferocious than ever. This eighth album nudges hardcore to the back of the

ALBUM REVIEWS

room in favour of enticing black and death metal influences. Vocalist Mike Score is a mix of venomous and brutal, and the songwriting is tight throughout. Notable standouts include *Caustic Abomination*, *Wrath/Plague*, and the furious title track, thanks to the powerful pacing, devastating roars, and exhilarating fretwork. All Out War continue to dig deep, innovate, deliver introspective lyrics, and share their outrage with the world via extreme music in a way that makes you want to stand up and fight alongside them.

■■■■■■■■■■■

FOR FANS OF: Ringworm, Integrity, Code Orange

NIK YOUNG



APHYXION

Ad Astra

CIRCULAR WAVE

Danish metalcore mob keep themselves and the moshpits busy

The youngest band to ever play Wacken and support for Metallica six years ago, Danish mob Aphyxion are all in their early 20s and are already on album four. *Ad Astra* builds on 2019's *Void*, which saw them move from melodic death metal to a more contemporary metalcore sound, and solidifies that progression over 40 furious minutes. Opening track *Roll The Dice* boasts an infectious chorus, *Rover's* breakdown is made for moshpits and *Anomalies* brings an electronic edge to the mix. In wider terms of the metalcore world, it's not groundbreaking in any sense, but there's a lot to enjoy across the 11 songs here, and it's a good amount of fun to boot.

■■■■■■■■■■■

FOR FANS OF: Motionless In White, Our Hollow, Our Home, We Came As Romans

ELLIOT LEAVER



AVATAR

Dance Devil Dance

CENTURY MEDIA

Sweden's kings of the carnivalesque forget to oil their joints

THERE CAN'T BE many bands who can write songs that sound like Humpty Dumpty stumbling around after an all-night bender and pull it off with aplomb. Since their inception, Gothenburg circus metallers Avatar have toyed with eclectic sounds while always keeping things unmistakably on brand. But just when it feels like there's nothing left to explore, their ninth studio album pulls them in new and surprising directions.

"Why have drums, why have bass, if people don't move their feet?" is the question posed on the accompanying bio to *Dance Devil Dance*. From *Gotta Wanna Riot*'s 60s surf groove through the glitterball beat of *The Dirt I'm Buried In* to the table-flipping punkish smash of *Hazmat Suit*, Avatar have plumbed *Dance Devil Dance* with all sorts of weird and wonderful flavours, all engineered to get you grooving.

There are moments here that hark back to Avatar's previous albums. On the opening title track, the versatile Johannes Eckerström growls, sings and wails over the death metal riffs that

Avatar have always woven in so well. Sinister fretwork also prevails on sleazy groover *Do You Feel In Control* and the blackened *Clouds Dipped In Chrome*. Meanwhile, *Valley Of Disease* conjures

images of a painted and maniacal Johannes stomping around a moshpit and getting up in the audience's faces.

But where *Dance Devil Dance* comes unstuck is its inability to be seamless. Nine albums in, Avatar should be experts in eclecticism, and while there's a charm to their

cheekier dance-floor-inspired moments, it doesn't quite mesh. It's jarring to hear *On The Beach*'s vaudevillian playfulness sandwiched between two of the album's heaviest tracks, while the smoky jazz club vibe of *Train* is one Mike Patton move too far. No doubt Johannes Eckerström is already concocting a visual spectacle to go with their sonic mayhem, in which case *Dance Devil Dance* might make a lot more sense in the live arena.

FOR FANS OF: Avenged Sevenfold, Faith No More, Pain

HOLLY WRIGHT



BENEATH MY FEET

In Parts, Together

NOBLE DEMON

Progressive metalcore crew make their return on uneven ground

This is Beneath My Feet's first album in nearly a decade, but during that time they haven't found anything new or innovative to bring to the table. The Swedish quintet's recycling of familiar metalcore and djent tropes can still pack a punch, in the form of *Dig My Grave*'s elastic riffs and the earnest chorus of *When Both Our Worlds Collide*. Yet, elsewhere, the glitchy electronics sound forced, and *Is This Really You* recalls Periphery without the interesting fiddly bits.

It's understandable that after such a long absence, the Swedes want to pack in as many songs as possible, but 13 tracks in 46 minutes without much deviation turns into a slog on the home stretch.

FOR FANS OF: Born Of Osiris, Heart Of A Coward, Periphery

ADAM BRENNAN



BIZARREKULT

Den Tapte Krigen

SEASON OF MIST

Existential dread from Siberia's black metal exile

It took 16 years for Siberian multi-instrumentalist Roman V to realise his creative vision. Inspired by an ever-increasing sense of dread, he relocated to Norway and began the process of putting years' worth of poetry to a suitably chaotic soundtrack. The product was 2021's *Vi*

Overlevde, a raw exploration of self-determination through existential crisis, with Roman's wife Dina's haunting vocals offsetting his harsh recriminations. With the creative floodgates finally opened, *Den Tapte Krigen* follows a year later. Its predecessor's ferocity remains, tempered slightly, with more space for melody, experimentation, and a crisper production. It's a frenetic, varied journey, the consternated sound of a species at war with itself, internally and externally.

FOR FANS OF: Fluisteraars, Alcest, Grima

TOM O'BOYLE



BRIDEAR

Aegis Of London... Live!

SETSUZOKU

Japan's heavy metal joy-givers chart their ascent

Aside from the fact that Bridear play heart-racing, cheesy, Iron Maiden-worshipping heavy metal in all its gleeful glory, the key takeaway of *Aegis... Live!* is that, after slogging away in their home country for over 10 years, this J-metal quintet are starting to gain serious momentum in the UK. Less than a year after they played a sparsely attended show at Camden's Underworld, this performance begins with a sold-out crowd at London's Boston Music Room chanting their name and escalates from there. Sure, some of singer Kimi's clean vocals are a little patchy, but glorious guitar harmonies, a grunge-tinged *Ray Of Chaos* and the screaming, overblown power solos of *Daybreak* and *Bloody Bride* keep everyone entranced.

FOR FANS OF: Lovebites, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest

DANNII LEIVERS



DISTANT Heritage

CENTURY MEDIA

International deathcore brutalists hone their attack

Dutch/Slovakian five-piece Distant have been steadily perfecting their down-tempo deathcore formula over eight years. As a result, this third studio album lands on Century Media trimmed of excess and aimed straight at the solar plexus. The sci-fi-leaning themes of previous releases remain, ramping up the aural intensity. Featuring unnerving atmospherics and ear-shattering vocal blasts, *Heritage* doesn't let up, perpetually hammering listeners via a melee of vicious instrumentation. From the unsettling synths of intro *Acid Rain* and *Human Scum*'s neck-snapping devastation, to the operatics of *Orphan Of Blight*, *Heritage* grabs you by the throat and refuses to let go. And with the likes of Suicide Silence's Eddie Hermida adding to the maelstrom, this is the sound of deathcore rising.

■■■■■■■■■■■

FOR FANS OF: Cabal, ten56., Bodysnatcher

SOPHIE MAUGHAN



EYES Congratulations INDISCIPLINARIAN

Scandic hardcore punks prove they're more than party animals

Danish hardcore crew Eyes' 2020 album *Underperformer* showed a hell of a lot of promise, and it's definitely been delivered on here. There have been a lot of great Scandinavian punk

and hardcore bands lately, with a characteristic drive and swagger. But although Eyes do have that Turbonegro groove, it's buried beneath something far more gruesomely heavy. The title track is a perfect example; it's dead catchy, but it has a tar-thick riff that would make Will Haven fans lick their lips, and a vocal delivery that borders on extreme metal. On *Chew* they start with sounding like the electronic garage rock of Death From Above 1979, before picking it apart like a raw scab and then turning it into a violent post-hardcore number. Awesome.

■■■■■■■■■■■

FOR FANS OF: Refused, Will Haven, These Arms Are Snakes

STEPHEN HILL



FÅGELLE Den Svenska Vreden

MEDICATION TIME

Beauty, blight and bewilderment from Sweden's experimental artist

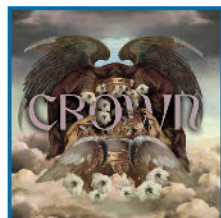
Fågelles' second album is a fascinating thing: light, elegant and gossamer-thin, but, when put to the test, exhibiting tremendous strength. Despite its undeniable beauty, simmering discontent runs through *Den Svenska Vreden* like poison in the veins, lending proceedings a quiet intensity as post-rock prettiness mingles with crackling noise and delicate, Constellation Records ambience. Skittering percussion and lonely guitar parts are joined by the sampled sounds of pigeons and pine needles to form an idiosyncratic yet perfectly aligned patchwork. Even when another voice enters the fray – Joakim Thåström of Svensk punk legends Ebba Grön, on the excellent *Kroppen* – it feels like

a logical piece of the same strange puzzle. Despite its hushed subtlety, there's also a steely uniqueness of vision at play – the kind that can drop jaws at Roadburn, and hold its own on tour alongside the similarly indefinable Big | Brave.

■■■■■■■■■■■

FOR FANS OF: Lindy-Fay Hella, Low, Snow Ghosts

ALEX DELLER



FOR I AM KING Crown

PRIME COLLECTIVE

Sharply calibrated melodeath from the fast-rising Dutch five-piece

With their third album, this Dutch melodeath crew continue to spew out solid, progressive and technically proficient metal. Opener *Avarice* kicks things off with clean, lustrous guitars and a spiralling riff, before Iran-born vocalist Alma Alizadeh wipes the shine clean off it with rabid, Randy Blythe-meets-Tatiana-Shmayluk screams. The influence of both Children Of Bodom and Arch Enemy looms large on *Trojans* and lead single *Liars*, which provides the band with a genuine pit-starting banger as Alizadeh grimly heralds the end of days: 'The earth is shaking / It's calling for our help / Death will follow'. Saying that, *Crown* is frequently beautiful, too. *Bloodline*'s incandescent post-metal intersperses claustrophobic grooves with serene space, while *Disciples* works subtle symphonic influences among the clean leads and sordid roars. This is for people who like brutal, intelligent metal that keeps you guessing.

■■■■■■■■■■■

FOR FANS OF: Jinjer, Arch Enemy, Children Of Bodom

DANNI LEIVERS

Big | Brave: the captivating voice of resistance



BIG | BRAVE

Nature Morte

THRILL JOCKEY

Heavy rebel music on the righteous side of history

THERE WAS ALWAYS

something subversive about Big | Brave. Ever since 2014's *Feral Verdure*, the Quebec trio have been embraced by the doom and post-metal scenes, while casually making any such affiliations entirely redundant. Where most lumbering, riff-based heaviness comes with a side-order of rock'n'roll machismo, Big | Brave songs have always felt like righteous howls on behalf of the downtrodden, with Robin Wattie's extraordinary voice as their fraught but tender epicentre. Experimental by default as much as by design, each successive album has only reinforced the band's uniqueness, and *Nature Morte* is no different.

An invigorating storm of post-punk soul, opener *Carvers, Farriers And Knives* is as direct and dynamic as anything BB have ever recorded. Sonically mischievous and extravagantly distorted, it bears Robin's voice aloft on rolling waves of noise, before veering briefly into more tranquil waters and stuttering to a disgusted collapse. *Nature Morte* largely eschews all-out hostility in favour of a slow-burning, insidious approach, while *The One Who Borne A Weary Load* extends its sludgy tendrils from scratchy, noise-rock miasma into amorphous, dirge territory, with Robin adrift amid the fractured, soporific scree. *My Hope Renders Me A Fool* is more bitter than sweet: a wandering cloud of bass swell and overdriven hiss that's as pretty as it is unnerving.

Half bewitched, avant-folk reverie, part pitiless, dissonant slurry, *The Fable Of Subjugation* is genuinely terrifying, which is presumably the point. Meanwhile, *A Parable Of The Trusting* starts like some hellish outtake from The Birthday Party's *Prayers On Fire*, before steadily building to what can only be described as a big, fuck-off riff. At least the closing *The Ten Of Swords* offers battered listeners a comparatively soft landing. *Nature Morte* really hurts, but Big | Brave have only grown in power by creating it.

■■■■■■■■■■■

FOR FANS OF: Esoteric, My Bloody Valentine, Swans

DOM LAWSON





GRAPHIC NATURE

A Mind Waiting To Die

RUDE

UK nu metalcore newbies come out racing from the blocks

The debut album from these Kent bruisers is steeped in nu metal and talk of mental health. But *A Mind...* is no rehash of Limp Bizkit; this is the frenetic energy of early Slipknot combined with a smattering of electronic samples and subject matters including neuro-divergence. The result is 35 minutes of chaotic, pulsating music that will leave your head hanging onto your neck by mere sinews. The thunderous *Bad Blood* is a maelstrom of riffs and pit-inciting verses, the didgeridoo-sampling (yes, you read that right) *Killing Floor* hits all the right spots and *A Twin* is a sinister, spoken-word affair that will have goosebumps appearing in spades. It's no secret that an excellent first album can elevate a band's stature immeasurably; watch 2023 become the year Graphic Nature bludgeon their way into the spotlight.



FOR FANS OF: Slipknot, Cane Hill, Blood Youth

ELLIOT LEAVER



HALF ME

Soma

ARISING EMPIRE

Blistering nu metalcore debuts clearly come in twos

This German metalcore collective's debut album is a caustic headcharge, offering up an aggressive and contemporary sound

that's shaped by 90s nu metal and metallic hardcore. Opener *Wraith's* pounding breakdowns are accompanied by Christopher Zühlke's effortless transitions between brutal, throat-tearing screams and powerful cleans, before *Trauma Culture* bulldozes a path littered with feral blasts and tortured introspection. *Proxy* doffs its cap equally to Slipknot and Loathe, as high-octane energy and relentless drums wrestle with cold, industrial-tinged atmospherics. Elsewhere, razor-sharp cuts *Zenit* and *I Am But A Guest In Exile* rapidly build and unfurl among eerie programming and a filthy slew of staccato riffs. Disorientating at times but always exciting, *Soma* rewards with each subsequent listen. Half Me have unveiled a monstrous statement of intent.

FOR FANS OF: Borders, Graphic Nature, Annisokay
SOPHIE MAUGHAN



KING KRAKEN

MCLXXX

SELF-RELEASED

Welsh riff-wielders land a monstrous debut album

In the year 1180, King Sverre of Norway confidently told his people there was a marauding Kraken in the waters between their country and Iceland. Hence the reason King Kraken have chosen *MCLXXX* as the title of their debut album. The songs here could rival the legendary beast on size alone. This is a colossal, riff-filled album of classic metal and blues-influenced hard rock, with *Veins* and *Bastard Liar* delivering feelgood anthems for both long drives and in-home headbanging sessions.

Haddonfield 78 dips its toes into Sabbath territory by allowing the riffs to hang in the air more, and *Walls Of Jericho* boasts the best of a number of great guitar solos. There's a huge amount of potential stored in this bunch; you'd do well to keep an eye on them.

FOR FANS OF: Clutch, Black Stone Cherry, Black Sabbath

ELLIOT LEAVER



KLONE

Meanwhile

KSCOPE

France's celebrated post-rockers focus all their forces

Seeing Klone live can be a transcendental experience. The prog metal-cum-post-rock Frenchmen routinely shatter the senses of whoever's watching with their heavy grooves, while vocalist Yann Ligner projects so powerfully it makes you wonder if he could sing that shit *Master Exploder*-style. That punch has never quite translated onto their records, which is a problem the quintet seem to be conscious of. The giveaway is that, for *Meanwhile*, they tapped their sound guy Chris Edrich to produce, and he's tightened the songs into what they call their most direct yet. The drums smack like shotgun blasts as Yann stretches from Maynard James Keenan-esque howls to all-consuming roars on *Within Reach* and *Night And Day*. This isn't Klone's most progressive release, but who cares when everything that makes this band such underrated showmen is getting shoved centre stage?

FOR FANS OF: Puscifer, The Ocean, Katatonia
MATT MILLS



Delain embark on a bold new adventure

DELAIN

Dark Waters

NAPALM

Dutch symphonic metallers get a new lease of life

WHEN THE NEWS

broke in February 2021 that every member of Delain had quit, bar keyboardist Martijn Westerholt, many fans thought the symphonic metallers were finished. The split came out of the blue; only a year before, the band had released their horribly named, but musically impressive sixth album, *Apocalypse & Chill*, which had propelled them to another level. And while Martijn vowed to continue as a solo project, many wondered whether the Delain name could survive, not least given the departure of Charlotte Wessels, who had been their voice and face for 16 years.

They needn't have worried; *Dark Waters* sees Delain rebuilt from the ashes. Last August, Martijn announced the return of original guitarist Ronald Landa and original drummer Sander Zoer, and unveiled Ludovico Cioffi and Diana Leah as his new bassist and singer respectively, ensuring they'd march forward with both familiarity and freshness.

This feels like a band reborn: grandiose and fizzing with bright energy. Lead single *The Quest And The Curse* sets the bar high, with Diana, whose pure and powerful vocals pose more than a passing resemblance to Charlotte's, leading a bejewelled chorus twinkling among dramatic orchestration and barks from Ronald Landa. On the atmospheric *Mirror Of Night* and *Tainted Hearts*, symphonic and power metal influences are tempered by sparkling pop sensibilities that drive the band's new incarnation home. *Moth To A Flame* is deliciously cheesy, borrowing retro riffs from the Battle Beast playbook, but it's the choir-led drama of *Invictus*, which features ex-Nightwish bassist Marko Hietala's distinctive yowl, that leads things to a thrilling, overblown apex.

Delain have often found themselves overlooked in favour of their more bombastic peers, but *Dark Waters* sees them stand defiantly alone. Quite the comeback.



FOR FANS OF: Nightwish, Epica, Within Temptation
DANNI LEIVERS





Host: Gregor Mackintosh and Nick Holmes regain their former grace

HOST IX

NUCLEAR BLAST

Paradise Lost's creative kernel reawaken their goth-pop passion

WITH ITS ARTY photography and Times New Roman lowercase betokening a full flight into millennial alt rock, Paradise Lost's 1999 album *Host* proved a bridge too far for a significant tranche of the band's fanbase. Doubling down on the electronic goth-pop influence that dominated 1997's transformative *One Second*, the even poppier follow-up left a trail of heartbroken headbangers in its wake. Many felt disenfranchised and disconsolate that UK metal's brightest hope had cut their hair, dimmed the guitars and drunk the Depeche Mode Kool-Aid. And not least because it was so soon after 1995's *Draconian Times* had brought classic UK HM back into the Top 20, apparently securing a glorious future for a band often hyped as the 'Yorkshire Metallica'. For another section of their fanbase, however, *Host* was an awestruck awakening, PL's immersion in gothic electro-pop proving just as influential across European scenes as their early experiments in gothic death-doom.

Since Gregor Mackintosh rediscovered his distortion pedals, Nick Holmes

learned to roar again, and PL regrew their metallic fangs, the controversial *Host* sound can now be affectionately revisited – and discreetly perfected. With this project, these longstanding creative



partners have reapplied themselves to the softer, synth-heavy stylings of late 90s PL, bringing 20 years of musical and personal growth to bear on these more nakedly emotional songs.

IX fair pisses all over *Host*. The songwriting is more captivatingly elegant; the production is far richer and darker; the 80s new wave influences are more pronounced; the vocals powerfully improved; and the atmospheres of pensive gloom are more chillingly palpable. With Nick long-established in old-school death metal supergroup Bloodbath, and Greg masterminding gnarly crust-doom project Strigoi, *Host*'s intriguing debut feels not just welcome, but an actively merciful development.

FOR FANS OF: The Cure, Depeche Mode, A Flock Of Seagulls

CHRIS CHANTLER



MEMORIAM

Rise To Power

REAPER ENTERTAINMENT

UK death metal overlords recount the wages of war

The fifth outing from these UK DM stalwarts – led by ex-Bolt Thrower frontman Karl Willetts – is their most refined to date. The band incorporate generous helpings of melody without sacrificing their core heaviness; *The Conflict Is Within*, for instance, is shaped largely by Scott Fairfax's melancholic leads, evocative of devastated landscapes and incalculable loss. Having continually strengthened the foundations of their sound, Memoriam are confident enough to make subtle but significant adjustments to their approach. *Rise To Power* shows a band with an acute idea of what makes their music work and how it can evolve without losing its original fire.

FOR FANS OF: Benediction, Bolt Thrower, Obituary

JOSEPH STANNARD



NARROW HEAD

Moments of Clarity

CHURCH ROAD

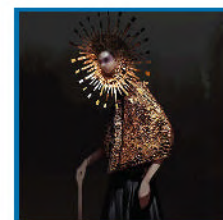
Atmospheric Texans keep the shoegaze revival rolling

Narrow Head proved themselves a fantastic addition to the shoegaze revival with 2020's *12th House Rock*. This third album pays even more attention to soaring vocal hooks amid the swirling waves of reverb. The Texans rarely allow themselves to get lost in their own quagmire of effects and

delay; *Gearhead* and *Trepanation* provide a sense of constant propulsion with hard-edged 90s alt rock riffs, while *Flesh & Solitude* recreates the heavy/sensual dichotomy of *Around The Fur*-era Deftones. Third albums are often career-defining moments, and with *Moments Of Clarity*, Narrow Head deliver on their early promise.

FOR FANS OF: Smashing Pumpkins, Holy Fawn, Deftones

REMFRY DEDMAN



NATT

Natt

EDGED CIRCLE PRODUCTIONS

Nordic post-rock alliance fall short of their ultimate destination

Natt promise absorbing instrumental soundscapes on their debut. Featuring René Misje (ex-Krakow) on guitar, bass and clarinet, Lindy-Fay Hella co-conspirator Roy Ole Førlund on synthesizers, and Enslaved drummer Iver Sandøy on percussion and production, the calibre of the musicianship is undeniable. The first of three lengthy tracks, *Skillevei* offers glorious opening refrains, but the sun-kissed swathes of organ and flourishing chords are frustratingly cut short for post-rock grandiosity. *Appell* digs deeper into the post-rock paradigm, and *Etterslått* begins with eight minutes of minimalism before foreboding keys emerge, gradually building towards an eccentric climax. *Natt* is an occasionally spellbinding journey, but ultimately it's more side-project than supergroup.

FOR FANS OF: Long Distance Calling, Red Sparowes, Russian Circles

TOM O'BOYLE



OAK
Disintegrate
SEASON OF MIST

Black-hearted Portuguese doom with a fearless streak

Formed by two members of Gaerea, Oak aren't interested in pandering to short attention spans. *Disintegrate* comprises a single, 45-minute track – seemingly the fruit of endless, exploratory jams, but here fashioned into a remarkably coherent and frequently riveting post-doom odyssey. It begins as a mesmerising, glacial funeral doom affair, but slowly begins to evolve, picking up grit and momentum along the way. While its first half is an exercise in slow-release misery, at the half-hour point, the black metal spirit begins to shine through with more piercing persistence, with both drummer and mouthpiece revelling in the newly gothic splendour of things. A final march away from the light offers a brief glimmer of hope and a dash of refinement. A brave, characterful first effort.



FOR FANS OF: Gaerea, (early) Opeth, Fell Ruin
DOM LAWSON



PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS
Land Of Sleeper
ROCKET RECORDINGS

Nightmare-inducing missives from the north-east England badlands

The pigeonhole-busting force of nature dive deeper down the rabbit hole on their fourth album, and it's an absolute beast –

a magnetic marriage of the doom punk bruisers' Iommi-inspired riffs and firebrand frontman Matt Baty's scathing lyrics. He pulls no punches as he fully surrenders to his existential dread. The psych-rock-flecked *Big Rig* feels like an anthem in the making, especially when he ominously roars 'This is how we survive', while *The Weatherman* is one of the best tracks they've ever made; featuring appearances from Bonnacons Of Doom vocalist Kate Smith, and a choir including Richard Dawson and Sally Pilkington from indie-pop band Hen Ogledd, it's an intense and cinematic offering suggestive of 70s-era British folk horror. Unflinchingly dark from start to finish, *Land Of Sleeper* is an essential soundtrack for this nightmarish age.



FOR FANS OF: Luminous Bodies, Conan, Melvins
EDWIN McFEE



SANGUISUGABOGG
Homicidal Ecstasy
CENTURY MEDIA

A fully loaded death/grind buffet you can dance to

Ever fancy air drumming to the sound of *St. Anger* with songs about testicular rot? Ohio's Sanguisugabogg are only four years in with a name that hardly rolls off the tongue and a twisted sense of humour, but they earned their stripes two years ago on debut *Tortured Whole*, with the hackneyed term 'sick' being, for once, the only appropriate adjective. As sleazy as hair metal was supposed to be in the 80s, this is the real deal: as sticky, slimy and depraved as a triple-deck greasy burger with enough toppings to make you puke

just from looking at it. Even more disturbing is the fact this is being achieved with very little blast, a snare drums that goes 'bong' and a strangely danceable groove leading the proceedings instead of the usual over-saturated caveman guitar licks.



FOR FANS OF: Mortician, Pungent Stench, Xysma
OLIVIER BADIN



SLEGEST
Avstand
DARK ESSENCE

Norse shit-kickers with a pure rock spirit

As every sensible black metal fan knows, the subgenre was forged in the fires of rock'n'roll. Admittedly, Slegest acknowledge that debt to the fervently traditional with a little more passion and directness than most, and *Avstand* sounds rather unconcerned with ticking anyone's purity box as a result. The Norwegians always had a swagger, but here they have reached a snarling, priapic zenith of not giving a fuck. *Innsikt's* strident doom-rock is achingly familiar, and yet delivered with such seething fury that it feels disarmingly fresh. *Forløysning og Rus* is a fidgety post-punk tirade that reeks of sleaze and, oddly, the first Adam And The Ants album. *Vinterkristus* is riotous, frost-covered hardcore punk, and as convincing a salute to Venom and Darkthrone as you are likely to hear this year. Best of all, *Gåte's* sinister blues comes with sonorous sax and a concluding burst of heavy metal thunder.



FOR FANS OF: Darkthrone, Vreid, Kvelertak
DOM LAWSON



Insomnium examine the deep, dark roots of fear of female agency

INSOMNIUM
Anno 1696
CENTURY MEDIA

Melodeath veterans revisit the darkest of ages

SWEDEN WAS SEIZED

by a paranoia over witchcraft towards the end of the 17th century. At its apex, pastor Laurentius Hornæus was commanded to exterminate black magic in his village. He shoved children into ovens and threatened to burn them alive if they didn't testify against local women, then oversaw 71 beheadings in a single day. It's within this butcherous episode that Insomnium have set the narrative of their ninth album and second rock opera after 2016's *Winter's Gate*. The underrated melodeath quintet, in the process, have struck an apex they've been levitating towards since *Winter's Gate* replaced the goth-flecked gloom of viral hit *While We Sleep* with prog scope and black metal iciness.

Admittedly, *Anno 1696* doesn't venture so far as to be another one-song, 40-minute epic. Its core is in melodeath convention, epitomised by the no-nonsense anthems *The Witch Hunter* and *Lilian*. Insomnium's trio of guitarists unsurprisingly cram both with flamboyant leads, their melodies matched by the roar-along choruses of bassist/singer Niilo Sevänen.

Off the back of that framework, the rest of the album is laden with surprises – and therein lie *Anno 1696's* greatest moments. Opening track 1696 commences with jangling acoustic guitars, then drops to double-bass drumming and flurrying riffs in a plummet sharp enough to crack the earth. The heavy metal muscle gets amplified on *White Christ*, which marches along in a parade of Machine Head-bothering grooves. Meanwhile, the folk undercurrents blossom into overtones on *The Unrest*: a clean-sung ballad immediately juxtaposed with *The Rapids* and its black metal arpeggios.

With 26 years of dynamism under their belts, no one album can be the definitive Insomnium experience. However, in its balance of prog, folk and black metal with straight-ahead death metal blows, *Anno 1696* is as good a late-career summary as you can get.



FOR FANS OF: Omnium Gatherum, Be'lakor, Edge Of Sanity
MATT MILLS



MÅNESKIN

Rush!
SONY

Italian Eurovision superstars deliver more than is necessary

IF LORDI WERE suaver, hornier and Italian... er, they might be playing a sold-out O2 Arena this May. They're not, but Måneskin are. The Roman four-piece countered Eurovision's 15-year rock flaccidity in 2021, winning the competition with *Zitti E Buoni* before thrusting onto festival main stages worldwide stream of raunchy, infectious anything left in the sack, tho



Given their shtick is essentially ‘White Stripes, Royal Blood and Franz Ferdinand, but sexy’, your sustained pleasure through album number three depends on how much more–neskin you want. There are 17 tracks across 53 minutes, all either ‘the uptempo banger with the Meg White bass drum bit’ or ‘the wistful ballad about shagging and/or loneliness’. It’s the same shit: Victoria De Angelis’s basslines thicker than God’s booty, Thomas Raggi’s choppy riffs recalling the mid–2000s sans chinos, and Damiano David’s ragged drawl still finding ways to express how much he loves to *fuck*.

Opener *Own My Mind* deploys the trademark build-and-release Måneskin chorus, accented by Ethan Torchio's climaxing snare rolls that genuinely sound like gunfire samples. He's at it again on album highlight *Gasoline*, laying down militaristic beats to underpin the "We're gonna dance on gasoline!" gang vocal that modern-day Fall Out Boy would, dunno, trade a llama-shaped NFT for?

But for an album called *Rush!*, this needn't be an hour. *Kool Kids'* mockney posturing is funny, but the actual song is ass; *Timezone's* Imagine Dragons-ish percussive/vocal interplay belies Måneskin's usual urgency, sounding stale. Double-bagging the Italian-language tracks and three singles at the end is unhinged behaviour, too, and *Rush!* is just that. It's kinda messy. Måneskin aren't brilliant yet, but despite the record's patchiness, their sheer exuberance makes bands like Greta Van Fleet seem as fun as a funeral.

FOR FANS OF: White Stripes, Royal Blood, Franz Ferdinand
ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

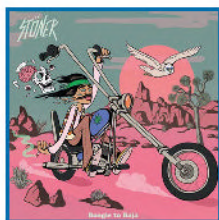


SORROWFUL LAND
Faded Anchors Of The Past
BLACK LION

Artful doom from Ukrainian multi-instrumental miserabilist

Three albums in, multi-instrumentalist Max Molodtsov's talent for crafting grandiose doom metal remains at a resonant peak. Here, you'll find dolmen-like riffs blotting out the sunlight, melodies streaming like pennants at a monarch's funeral and echoing piano notes suggestive of a former lover's fading footsteps. Max's own growls and mutters are joined by a hoard of European doom luminaries (doominaries?) including members of Soliloquium and A Dream Of Poe, who lend their talents to standout tracks *The Cold Gray Fog Of Dawn* and *Small Lost Moments*. Despite the leaden pace, *Faded Anchors...* is artful and intellectually spry – a death-blasted slab of morbidity that clasps you tighter with every note.

FOR FANS OF: *Paradise Lost, Morgion, Warning*
ALEX DELLER



STÖNER
Boogie To Baja
HEAVY PSYCH SOUND.

Former Kyuss members bring the delirium back to the desert

With Brant Bjork and Nick Oliveri comprising the line-up of this can't-believe-the-name's-still-available band, it's surprising that Stöner's latest isn't packaged in a sand-blasted doobie and

delivered in an airbrushed shaggin' wagon by Argyle from *Stranger Things*. *Boogie...* is exactly what you'd expect: deceptively intricate, psychedelic bong rock driven by a punk-influenced backbeat, bandana riffs and bellbottom vocals. Stöner's pedigree means that the fade of the Black Flag-esque *It Ain't Free* into the title track's lava lamp groove is executed with as much fury as paisley haze, and combines the desert's sparse, unforgiving nature with its annual terraforming at Burning Man.

FOR FANS OF: *Fu Manchu*,
Mondo Generator,
Red Fang

KEVIN STEWART-PANKO



STORMO
Endocannibalismo
PROSTHETIC

Italian noiseniks channel four decades of punk rock frenzy

Stormo are brilliantly chaotic. If you're a fan of the swerving, pounding punk rock of early Bad Brains mixed with the clattering, riff-heavy disorder of Show Me The Body, *Endocannibalismo* will tick plenty of boxes. *Sorte* and *Frame* channel the angular weirdness of Fugazi, the relentless pace of Drive Like Jehu and the sheer wanton aggression of The Hope Conspiracy all at the same time. It's like they've ground down every great punk rock band from the last 40 years into a powder and then greedily snorted a massive line of it. At 11 songs over 29 minutes, *Endocannibalismo* is an early contender for the most exciting punk album of 2023.

FOR FANS OF: Show Me The Body, Converge, Soul Glo
STEPHEN HILL

**WORLD
SERVICE**

Heavy metal uprisings from around the globe



CRITICAL DEFIANCE

No Life Forms

DYING VICTIMS PROD / UNSPEAKABLE AXE
The second album from these Dark Angel-worshipping Chileans is loaded with riffs as sharp as their bullet belts. Peppered with some impressive fretboard gymnastics, it's a feral, frantic and fun listen.

EDWIN McFEE

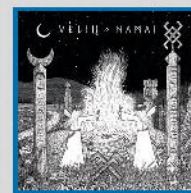


TRASTORNED

Into The Void

DYING VICTIMS PRODUCTIONS
Proof that Chilean thrash
is gonna fuck you up,
Trastorned go hard and
fast for 30 wild minutes,
every inch the new kings
of high-speed, old-school
blasphemy. Pure aggro,
with bonus thwackity bass.

DOM LAWSON



VĖLIŲ NAMAI
Alkai
NORDVIS PRODUKTION

An 11-track wormhole to the inner realm via folk instrumentation, pulsating techno and ceremonial chants. These Lithuanians will drop you off a thousand psychic miles from where you started.

JOE DALY

LIVE REVIEWS

VOLBEAT
SKINDRED / NAPALM DEATH

CARDIFF INTERNATIONAL ARENA, CARDIFF

Denmark's arena-filling rockers outsource the adventurism

WITH THE PROSPECT of a 16,500-capacity arena planned to replace and plug the gap between the newly rechristened, 5,000 capacity Cardiff International Arena and the enormous concerts at the Principality Stadium, it's hoped that the Welsh capital will soon be able to host the big-name shows that so often pass it by. However, a glaring issue is the apparent lack of appetite for hard rock and metal shows in the locality, with recent tours by Machine Head, Parkway Drive and Shinedown falling a great distance short of selling out tonight's venue.

Even though a sizeable chunk of the floor is taken up by the Metallica-style snake pit, Volbeat have had no such problems attracting punters for their first arena show in this neck of the woods. And it's also to their credit that they've done so with two perversely exciting live acts that make the bill such an odd but tantalising draw.

While supporting Alter Bridge in this venue six years ago, Volbeat brought forth Barney Greenway to yell his way through a rendition of *Evelyn*, much to most of the crowd's confusion. Correctly believing this to have been a genius idea, the Danes have now decided to unleash a full **NAPALM DEATH** set on an already heaving crowd. Though Barney has dialled up the comedy in his stage patter and Shane Embury is continuing his recent fascination with flowery shirts, the cuddly uncle façade doesn't dilute the legends' caustic assault. *Amoral* and *Contagion* prove their creative streak shows no sign of abating, while *Scum* and a ferocious *Suffer The Children* are still as pertinent decades on. Despite the competition it's up against, *When All Is Said And Done* puts in an early nomination for catchiest song of the night.

In a just world, **SKINDRED** would've headlined the CIA numerous times. As it is, the first show by the kings of "true Newportian ragga metal" at their local arena starts off tentatively, perhaps in respect to the brave headliners for graciously presenting them with the



Volbeat may not be the heaviest band, but they do have free candy floss

opportunity. However, once a few snippets of Van Halen, Dr. Dre and Benny Hill get thrown in alongside Benji Webbe's rabble-rousing, the crowd quickly gets sucked up into the band's lunacy. New track *Gimme That Boom* has the same effect as staples *Kill The Power* and *That's My Jam*, with the enthralled throng whipped up by Mikey Demus's easily digestible riffs and Benji's Welsh-baiting calls to "throw your fists up and shout like coal miners". Any lingering thoughts that they are doing their best not to steal the show are abolished as soon as *Nobody* barges its way through, while the Newport Helicopter takes off as soon *Warning* struts into view. As they leave the stage to Carly Simon's *Nobody Does It Better*, it's abundantly clear that the song choice is a statement of fact rather than arrogant boast, and indeed has been for some time.

It's to **VOLBEAT**'s credit that they've put everything in place to show they're worthy of headlining, with all the necessary ego ramps, kaleidoscopic screens, and an extended stage leading into CO2 jets, branded balloons and even a piano wheeled up for certain numbers. Apart from one particularly snotty address where Michael Poulsen asks for increased crowd participation, and new number *Becoming* being performed as an instrumental, you'd never know he's suffering with a heavy cold, as he enthusiastically leads the

band through the mandatory new songs alongside a smattering of covers and fan favourites.

The singalongs of *For Evigt* and *Lola Montez* hit at the right time, while the obligatory stomp of *The Devils' Bleeding Crown* and *Still Counting* bookmark the set. Despite looking like Forrest Gump after his third year of running across the US without shaving, Rob Caggiano is clearly exuding the fervour that has kept him enjoying nearly a decade as a bandmember, pulling numerous poses from some very tuneful lead breaks. Aside from a shoutout to renowned scumbag Jerry Lee Lewis before a burst of *Great Balls Of Fire*, there's nothing unsavoury or negative to say about a perfectly executed arena show.

Yet, in contrast to the opening acts' sense of unpredictability and verve, everything on display from Volbeat seems safe and methodical. Having emerged as such a unique commodity when their popularity began extending beyond the Danish border some 15 years back, the quartet have built up an impressively expanding audience without building much on any of the ideas that once made them special, instead settling into a niche and toeing the line. The commercial results are above reproach, but the tactic means that even the likes of *The Devil Rages On* and *Pool Of Booze*, *Booze, Booze*'s odes to the Devil and excess are polite rather than provocative. It may well lead to satisfied punters, yet such an achievement for a band on such a trajectory should surely be met with rapturous acclaim rather than mere respectful appreciation.

This benign and balanced approach may well be the formula for success and sustainability for touring artists who are increasingly feeling the fear of tougher economic implications. But it doesn't point to a future that shakes the fibres of our being or quickens the pulse in the way that a truly thrilling live experience can, no matter the size of the venue.

ADAM BRENNAN

THE SET
VOLBEAT

The Devil's
Bleeding Crown
Pelvis On Fire
Temple Of Ekur
Lola Montez
For Evigt
Fallen
Sad Man's Tongue
Wait A Minute
My Girl
Becoming
(Instrumental)
Last Day Under
The Sun
Seal The Deal
The Devil
Rages On

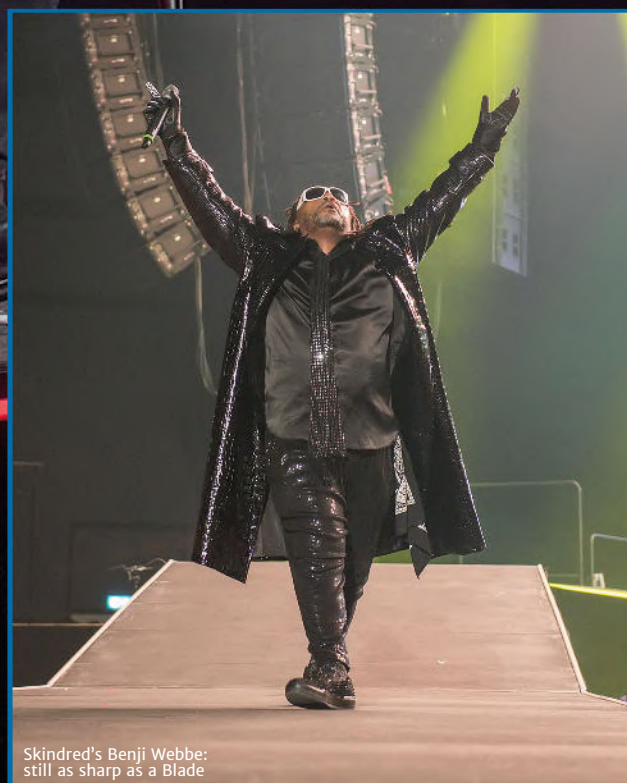
ENCORE

Let It Burn
Die To Live
Pool Of Booze,
Booze, Booze
Still Counting

Michael Poulsen: the accessible face of excess



Napalm Death probably shouldn't have played *Contagion* on this tour



Skindred's Benji Webb: still as sharp as a Blade

Bleed From Within give the Academy something to shout about

BIRDS IN ROW

THE BLACK HEART, LONDON

Such is the demand for this Parisian post-hardcore trio following the release of their stunning third full-length, *Gris Klein*, that this 150-capacity show is sold out, despite being announced just a week in advance. It's a small buzz but a fervent one, reflecting the passionate intensity with which the band approach their music. *Gris Klein* is a powerful plea for compassion, delivered over a jagged maelstrom of righteous indignation and stealthy hooks, and the material culled from it tonight feels particularly resonant. *Noah* simmers with seething fury before erupting and threatening to bring down the black brick walls of the venue, while the cut-up angular guitar manipulation of *Rodin* is fresh, thrilling and invigorating. 15-38, from the equally caustic *We Already Lost The World* album, is spine-tingling, met with a singalong that could decimate empires through sheer force of will alone. At present, Birds In Row feel like a closely guarded cult act with a small but intensely dedicated following. With more shows like this under their belts, and *Gris Klein* gradually generating the hype it so richly deserves, they won't remain a secret for long.

REMFRY DEDMAN

CHELSEA GRIN

CARNIFEX / BODYSNATCHER

ISLINGTON ACADEMY, LONDON

Tonight's show is sold out, and the anticipation in the room is palpable even before a note has been played. Following BODYSNATCHER's bruising, chug-worshipping set, CARNIFEX celebrate 15 years of debut *Dead In My Arms* by playing it in full. The support slot doesn't make the most sense given their revered status in the genre, but the fans don't care. The band walk on to deafening roars, unleashing the unrepentant savagery of *These Thoughts Became Cages* and *Slit Wrist Savior*, as the floor turns into a whirlwind of limbs. CHELSEA GRIN take their turn to cause near-constant whirlpools of bodies. Frontman Tom Barber has courted controversy with his claim he would refuse to play anywhere requiring vaccination, but tonight he mercifully leaves the inflammatory remarks out and focuses on commanding the faithful fans to wider and wider circle-pits as the band move from older, debut EP material to their latest record, *Suffer In Hell*. They sprinkle melodeath flourishes between obnoxious breakdowns and the crowd love every single moment, losing their minds and many drinks through a brilliantly brutalising set.

WILL MARSHALL

BLEED FROM WITHIN

HUMANITY'S LAST BREATH / ALLT

ISLINGTON ACADEMY, LONDON

Scotland's meteoric metalcore crew detonate in north London

DESPITE DOORS OPENING mere minutes before ALLT are due to take the stage, the Swedes gather a growing crowd for their rousing fusion of metalcore, djent and post-metal. *Paralysed*, off their latest EP, *The Seed Of Self-Destruction*, is monolithic, its grinding atmosphere accented with a towering chorus. The audience are clearly up for it, as heads move enthusiastically for other new cuts such as *Vinjett*. Frontman Robin Malmgren admits it's the first tour they've ever been on, but they deliver a slick performance that points towards a bright future.

HUMANITY'S LAST BREATH offer a much moodier take on deathcore that combines choral synths with chugging breakdowns. It's all corralled by Filip Danielsson's guttural roar, which is limited in range but not distractingly so. Unfortunately for the fellow Swedes, the guitars are buried by the drums, so the songs blend together into a formless mass. Given they lack the anthemic qualities of the other bands on the bill, preferring to focus on atmosphere instead, it leads to

a set that's easily the most underwhelming and disengaged of the night.

Tonight wraps up what's been a victory lap for Scottish metalcore heavyweights BLEED FROM WITHIN, following 2022's critically acclaimed *Shrine* album. As soon as the opening notes of *I Am Damnation* kick in, the crowd goes apeshit. *Sovereign's* rampaging double-kick fury sees half the venue engulfed in a circle-pit followed by a wall of death. Allt's Robin Malmgren joins them for *Levitate*, and closer *The End Of All We Know*, from 2020's excellent *Fracture* full-length, is all churning guitar and rapid-fire vocals until its gang-chanted chorus, as frontman Scott Kennedy crowdsurfs out to the middle of the room.

As Scott points out tonight, Bleed From Within have been together for 17 years. But since 2018's *Era*, they've hit on a knockout formula for arena-ready modern metal that leaves rooms like this drenched in sweat and barely containing the energy unleashed.

WILL MARSHALL

Orange Goblin: Ben Ward is all ears



ORANGE GOBLIN

BLACK SPIDERS / DESERT STORM

ELECTRIC BALLROOM, LONDON

London's metal institution raise the spirits and the beers once more

THE ORANGE GOBLIN Christmas gig has become a festive rite of passage alongside hangovers, heartburn and family arguments. Dodging the train strikes and frosty weather, a smattering of early comers see **DESERT STORM** kick off these celebratory proceedings with their rollicking stoner tones. "Who's getting drunk tonight? Let's have a fucking party!" bellows frontman Matt Ryan, before smashing the macabre *Black Bile* out of the bag. Merry Christmas, indeed.

BLACK SPIDERS might not have the songs to make them world famous, but their shows are stadium-worthy. Stuffed with dazzling riffs, flashing lights and hard-rocking anthems, the Sheffielders deliver a compact but thrilling ride. Playing in the capital for the first time since reforming, it's amazing to have them back.

In a twist to **ORANGE GOBLIN**'s normal hits-crammed setlist, tonight they're recognising 20 years of *Coup De Grace* by playing it in full. With the benefit of two decades to perfect

their stagecraft, the pivotal album by London's premier stoners shines with a new swagger. Songs such as *Made Of Rats*, which have a raw and fuzz-filled presence on record, are reinvented with a spirituous groove, while *Born With Big Hands* roars with playful, bluesy defiance. The second half of the set is filled with lesser-played songs, and despite frontman Ben Ward apologising that it might not sound up to scratch, it shows no signs of weakness. From *Red Web* to Misfits cover *We Bite*, these gems from the archive radiate OG's bar-brawl wisdom, not least *Jesus Beater*, which chugs with a doomier brand of their stonerisms, and *Stinkin' O' Gin*, gifted with some expert slide guitar work by Joe Hoare.

Like any Orange Goblin gig, there's an air of joyful abandon. The formidable Ben Ward is a gig veteran, and it shows in his witticisms and gruff-and-ready command. Meanwhile, Harry Armstrong still does a very noble job of replacing Martyn Millard on bass, and double-threats Joe Hoare and Chris Turner



Black Spiders: masters of plaid rock



Desert Storm get down with the party spirit

supply the quintessential riffs and thumping power to solidify their Southern-flecked fury.

Happily, there's time for a run of Orange Goblin favourites to finish off the night. From the psych groove of *Saruman's Wish* and *Quincy The Pigboy's* beer-spilling glee, to perennial favourites *Scorpionica* and *Red Tide Rising*, there are enough winners to see us all grinning into the next year.

HOLLY WRIGHT

Clutch: the perfect antidote to the winter blues



Green Lung are at full capacity



CLUTCH

GREEN LUNG

O2 ACADEMY, BRISTOL

Maryland's rock standard-bearers return to the West Country in triumph

WHILE THE ACADEMY can be relied on to be an uncomfortably stuffy, sweaty venue no matter the season, the current cold snap pervades the walls. As such, even though the show is near capacity, it's bloody freezing, with extra pressure on the bands to blast the chills away with the twin-assault of groove and riff.

You wouldn't know that **GREEN LUNG** are celebrating their recent move to Nuclear Blast, given that every performance is a glorious celebration of 50 years of metallic tradition. From John Wright showing how every keyboard player should approach their role, to Tom Templar's effortless stagecraft, the Londoners demonstrate how comfortable they are on any stage and in any company. Numbers from *Black Harvest* continue to steal the show, with *Old Gods* and a beckoning *Leaders Of The Blind* going down a storm accompanied by Scott Black's beguiling leads.

By contrast, **CLUTCH's** Tim Sult, Dan Maines and Jean-Paul Gaster seem almost lackadaisical in their approach. Yet it's that unfussy demeanour, somehow propelling one of the century's most exalted rock bands, that's made the Marylanders such a cherished commodity. While the musicians perform sublimely, Neil

Fallon assumes his role: The Greatest Showman meets your loveable-yet-erratic uncle who spends your annual gathering convincing you of his manifesto to run the country. Whether it's your first or 15th time in his presence, it's impossible not to be swept up by his absurdly idiosyncratic aura, as the likes of *Earth Rocker* and *How To Shake Hands* set the tone.

Four tracks from new album *Sunrise On Slaughter Beach* get an outing, and while their legacy is yet to be established, their quality is shown by the fact they sit comfortably in a setlist that shows off the best from the band's distinguished discography. *Nosferatu Madre* even sees an appearance from ex-Opeth ivory-tinkler Per Wiberg, complete with a large white Stetson helping him stand out from the shadows. He remains for the rest of the set, with (*Notes From The Trial Of*) *La Curandera* and a glorious singalong of *Mice And Gods* given the necessary organ treatment that is so often sacrificed live. Unsurprisingly, a rambunctious encore of *10001110101*, *Electric Worry* and a towering *The Face* caps off another triumphant trip to this neck of the woods. As if there was ever any doubt.

ADAM BRENNAN

FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM

SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE, LONDON

If you've been bewitched by the goth/post-punk wave sweeping through the metal scene of late, this is pretty much the altar. Regularly cited by the likes of Watain, Sólstafir, Behemoth and Immortal as a profound inspiration, **FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM** have garnered a mixed-age crowd for their annual solstice observance – baked-in goth pilgrims whose lives you feel revolve around this moment and people who weren't born when the band formed in 1984. Tonight they're playing 1988's *The Nephilim* in full – a transitional record between the rough-hewn debut *Dawnrazor* and the full-on progressive sensuality of their 1990 masterpiece, *Elizium*. Amid the requisite dry ice and the band's otherworldly cowboy garb, both elements combine to alchemical effect, frontman Carl McCoy the taciturn, still-charismatic anchor. From *Phobia's* *Ace Of Spades* riff leading a fevered charge, through *Moonchild's* anthemic invocation, to the exhausted yet exultant luxuriance of *Last Exit For The Lost*, FOTN's occult quest for enlightenment feels never-ending yet forever replenishing. As much as they're a legacy band whose last album was released over 17 years ago, tonight, as ever, they weave the most timeless and radiant of spells.

JONATHAN SELZER

INGESTED

PARTY CANNON / CELESTIAL SANCTUARY

ISLINGTON ACADEMY 2, LONDON

For the majority here, tonight is 2022's last gig, which lends proceedings a jovial atmosphere, helped in no small part by the silly 'Season's Beatings' tour name. **CELESTIAL SANCTUARY** warm up the venue with a heady mix of thrash riffs delivered with a punk attitude. It may not be 'the new wave of British death metal' as vocalist Thomas Cronin claims (or the first bold apocryphal proclamation of the night either) but it's a decent appetiser for what's to come. Perennial poster spoilers **PARTY CANNON** blow any notion of novelty out the water with an impressive set of extremity that is (thankfully) closer to The Tony Danza Tapdance Extravaganza than Alestorm. Sure, the stage antics are similar – inflatables feature heavily – but the Scottish bruisers are by far and away the heaviest, and best, band on the bill tonight. Savage, brutal fun. Once the Cannon has blown, the crowd thins a little for Manchester's **INGESTED**, although those who remain use the extra space to circle-pit and mosh with glee. The band prove to be far removed from the 'raw titans of British death metal' frontman Jason Evans claims them to be, but everyone throws themselves into the seasonal spirit with abandon.

REMFRY DEDMAN

Alter Bridge: three
chums, no flash



ALTER BRIDGE

HALESTORM / MAMMOTH WVH

O2 ARENA, LONDON

Arena rock heroes combine the uproarious and the uplifting

TWENTY THOUSAND ROCK'N'ROLL devotees have descended on Greenwich for an evening sure to get the blood pumping and keep spirits warm, despite the frozen spell cast over London. **MAMMOTH WVH**, aka Wolfgang Van Halen, refuses to let his surname speak for him, introducing himself solely as "Wolf". His radio- and arena-ready hard rock is inoffensive and easily palatable but sacrifices memorability, bar the final song that veers off into proggy territories.

HALESTORM, by contrast, are all piss and vinegar, lightning-rod frontwoman Lzzy Hale an immediately magnetic presence. Starting by belting out the opening lines of *The Steeple*, for the next 50 minutes, the O2 really is her church. The band look and act every inch the arena headliners they're sure to soon be, reinforced by the adulation of the crowd. "This one's for the ladies," Lzzy smirks before a roaring *Bombshell*, while *Love Bites (So Do I)* threatens to careen off the rails with its wild energy. For *Familiar Taste Of Poison*, the crowd

bathes the venue in phone lights. Unfortunately, the mid-set drum solo robs their otherwise towering performance of momentum at a key moment. As they close on *I Get Off* and *I Miss The Misery*, it's clear this stage will be theirs again before long.

ALTER BRIDGE, thanks in large part to down-to-earth frontman Myles Kennedy, are one of the less-visible arena-level rock bands in the world. They've released seven albums, soundtracked wrestlers' ring entrances and have ascended to fill huge venues – all without a whiff of controversy or clickbaity headlines. The decision to only play three songs off their latest album, the excellent *Pawns & Kings*, is a baffling one, but the opening *Silver Tongue* and album title track showcase just how easily the rockers can craft modern metal anthems as well as softer numbers. *This Is War*'s power metal-rivalling majesty takes its cues from Myles's soaring voice, while *Before Tomorrow Comes* elicits huge singalongs. It's a visual feast too, with demented *Adventure Time*



Lzzy Hale storms
the capital



Mammoth WVH:
a next-generation
talent



visuals accompanying *Silver Tongue* on the huge screens behind them, and a light show that frequently illuminates the crowd singing back every word. Guitarist Mark Tremonti takes over vocals for a stirring, bluesy rendition of *Burn It Down*, and *In Loving Memory* is rendered far more intimate in acoustic form, even in the arena setting. Humble they may be, but they deserve to reach the same stratospheric heights as their songs.

WILL MARSHALL



Sigh: short for 'psychedelic black metal mindfuck'

ANAAL NATHRAKH / SIGH

DE PROFUNDIS

THE SCALA, LONDON

Birmingham's blackened grind heroes find themselves on a precipice

OFFERING BOTH A possible farewell and a long-overdue return, tonight doesn't feel like a regular gig so much as a *coming together* – a sold-out crowd united for two bands with uniquely resonant places in the extreme metal firmament. The venue's already packed for **DE PROFUNDIS**. Captivating more through outright commitment rather than any flights of fancy other than brief moments of noodling, the local openers' groove-laden attack is pretty much the death metal part of the deathcore equation, laying a solid baseline for what's to follow.

No one's ever accused Japan's **SIGH** of sticking to any kind of formula over the past three decades, and even down to a trio they're still filtered through the prism of mainman Mirai's psychedelic muse. They might be down madcap saxophonist Dr. Mikannibal, but they've gained a sword-wielding, necro-Samurai guitarist instead, Nozomu Wakai, to embody the giddy, capricious rush. That it's been 12 years since they last played the UK only adds to the collective sense of wonder as their black metal roots are splayed out into technicolour riffs, while newer tracks blend anthemia and mayhem, as though you're wandering past a classic metal band while you're completely off your tits. A drummer in a Bet Lynch-meets-gorilla mask adds to the incongruity, but the likes of *Hail Horror Hail* are cornerstones of extreme metal's adventurism, while a closing cover of Venom's *Black Metal*



Anaal Nathrakh's Dave Hunt: doomsaying prophet of the people

pays tribute to the altar, powering through even as Nozomu's guitar cuts out.

ANAAL NATHRAKH are also missing a core member, but in their case, the absence is existential. Co-founder, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Mick Kenny, as frontman Dave Hunt tells the crowd, is now a mega-successful producer in LA, leaving their future uncertain. Tonight, Dave's recruited three members of the Voices/Akercocke axis, and as spluttering intro *Acheronta Movebimus* erupts into *Unleash*, this is as tight and coruscatingly apocalyptic as they've ever sounded. The entire floor goes apeshit, the unbridled, last-seconds-before-the-asteroid-hits power lancing the most primal parts of your consciousness even as songs rise up into vaulting, melodic vocal breaks.

But as much as Nathrakh are a we're-all-fucked thrill ride, the deep emotional bond everyone here has is down to their ability to wed endtimes fervour to genuine, down-to-earth social awareness, Dave switching from fevered prophet to man-of-the-people orator. If this is their final gig, it's fitting that the likes of *Submission Is For The Weak* and *Forging Towards The Sunset* burn here more brilliantly than ever.

JONATHAN SELZER

DAMIM OVERTHROW / SEWER TRENCH

THE BLACK HEART, LONDON

Knocking a pint glass out of a woman's hands isn't a surefire way to win over an audience, but **SEWER TRENCH** aren't the kind of band to get into any seasonal spirit. While the city's half-abandoned over the holidays, they're determined to fuck up the collegial atmosphere among the remainers gathered tonight, frontman Hadley Sharp constantly stalking the floor and getting in people's faces as their eviscerating death/grind attack lurches into confrontational overload. **OVERTHROW** are a much more unifying experience, and it takes a singularity of vision to not only fuse death, thrash, juggernaut grooves and anthemic melodies into an exhilarating whole, but make them sound like a personal crusade. Some bands pick and mix, Overthrow channel, and a closing cover of Sepultura's *Arise* has the wild-eyed frenzy that brings the classic era into an incendiary now. **DAMIM**, for all the Death DNA in their sound, also never feel like a throwback, their compulsive pace making for a visionary, horrified travelogue, shot through with progressive breaks. Frontman Nathanael makes for an affable guide between songs, even when paying tribute to late comrade Daniel Rumbol, but the sense of venturing into the most unstable of territories is shot through with otherworldly power.

JONATHAN SELZER

SHADOW OF INTENT ENTERPRISE EARTH / ANGELMAKER / TO THE GRAVE

THE FLEECE, BRISTOL

It's a debut UK show for Australian slam fanatics **TO THE GRAVE**, and they give a good account of themselves, with plenty of pit action developing early on. Canadian deathcore septet **ANGELMAKER** take the energy up a level, closing with a rousing *Leech* that gets a near-full room shouting every word back at them. **ENTERPRISE EARTH** are riding high off the back of last year's stellar album, *The Chosen*, and this momentum translates to their set. It's a high-octane affair where the chug of the guitars is on another level and the likes of *Reanimate*//*Disintegrate* and *They Have No Honor* hit hard. **SHADOW OF INTENT** have been waiting three years to play this run of shows, and they won't be upstaged by anyone. Leaning heavily on their latest – and most excellent – record *Elegy*, they're so visceral and bludgeoning it's amazing there's a venue left at the end of thunderous encore *Malediction*. Elsewhere, *The Heretic Prevails* gets a big reaction and *Melancholy* sees rowing pits break out in the middle of the room. For everyone present, 2023 has begun near-perfectly.

ELLIOT LEAVER

STONEDEAF PRODUCTIONS LTD. PRESENT

STONEDEAF

ONE DAY, ONE STAGE, ONE MONSTER ROCK SHOW

Blue Oyster Cult

SPECIAL GUESTS
TO BE ANNOUNCED

THERAPY?

ANSWER KING KING

MASON HILL

DERAPS

SOUTH OF
SALEM

CLATERAL

2018 5TH ANNIVERSARY 2023

HOSTED BY
CRUSHER

NEWARK SHOWGROUND

26TH AUGUST 2023

£55 ARENA (£40 U14) £70 ARENA & CAMPING (£45 U14) STONEDEADFESTIVAL.CO.UK

PLANET ROCK



*CHILDREN UNDER 14 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT

ILLUSTRATION & DESIGN MICKUSHER.COM - ©2022 STONEDEAF PRODUCTIONS LTD.

road crew

There's a two-year gap between every *Employed To Serve* album. Now it's been two years since *Conquering*, so can we expect album five soon?

"No, we're just going to be doing singles at the moment. 2023 is about making up for lost time with touring. I feel like we haven't played most of the new material live yet, and since *Eternal Forward Motion* came out nine months before Covid, we've had two albums affected by it. We just want to get some mileage out of them and hit some places we've never toured before. So, we might write an album but it's not our main focus."

Both *Conquering* and *Eternal Forward Motion* were massive arena metal records. What's it like finally getting to perform this material in big venues with Gojira?

"It's amazing! It's awesome to see how people react to songs that have opportunity for crowd interaction. You've got the 'HEY!'s' going on, you've got people with their kids in battle jackets going mental. It's wild, you can actually hear people breathing before you go onstage and you see so many people you can't make out their faces, they're like pebbles."

What have been your standout moments from being back on the road?

"At Roskilde, we bumped into Post Malone, which was fun. He's lovely. Annoyingly, he invited us to play beer pong with him but we were playing and I didn't want to get too drunk. And then I missed out on that photo of Dua Lipa and Turnstile [playing with him]. It was one of my biggest regrets not getting drunk before playing. We're too fucking professional!"

In 2020, you launched Church Road Records with your bandmate and husband Sammy Urwin. What was it like doing that alongside a pandemic and changing Brexit regulations?

"Everything that could go wrong and could have changed, changed

"POST MALONE INVITED US TO PLAY BEER PONG WITH HIM"



FIVE MINUTES WITH JUSTINE JONES

EMPLOYED TO SERVE

Their screamer-in-chief talks record labels, TikTok and playing massive arenas

WORDS: PARIS FAWCETT



during the pandemic. People have no money, there's all these stupid Brexit regulations, including on the band's side as well. Everything's expensive, everything's hard to get hold of. And with Royal Mail strikes and train strikes, you wonder if the records are going to get to fans and you worry if fans are gonna come to shows. You've just got to laugh at this point."

How have you adapted your business plan as things change?

"We've definitely had to work smart. We've had to take our stock back in house to save money, but that's worked really well. I think the more DIY you can be at the moment, the better. Go back to printing zines at home. It's that kind of proper recession, DIY, photocopier and a seven-inch sleeve era."

What record labels do you model Church Road on?

"Deathwish, 2012 era. That's what got me into this kind of music. You had Code Orange, Touché Amoré, Loma Prieta, Punch, Rise and Fall, Deafheaven and loads of Converge reissues. I was 19, maybe 20. I didn't go out to pubs as much and I had expendable income. I'd save up and get a huge order from Deathwish US every couple of months – it was sick!"

Last year, you and Sammy jumped on the TikTok train. What's the creative process behind your videos?

"I love TikTok. Me and Sammy just have random ideas in our heads and then we execute them. We try to be quick: when you're doing things that are supposed to be funny, you start overthinking, whereas if you surrender to it, and even if you're a bit cringe – which we are – you just commit. We try to have fun with it because it's a necessary evil, especially with running a label."

You read a lot of metal autobiographies during the pandemic. Which were your favourites?

"I really like the Ozzy one – I loved the bit where he thought he killed the priest. And of course, *Heavy Tales* by Jon Zazula, which I loved because it's from a record label perspective. It's about Jon and his wife starting Megaforce records and releasing Anthrax, and Metallica before they signed for Elektra. The Rex Brown one was also good. It's cool hearing about Pantera from a non-big character." **H**

ETERNAL FORWARD MOTION IS OUT NOW VIA SPINEFARM. EMPLOYED TO SERVE TOUR THE UK WITH GOJIRA THIS MONTH

IN FLAMES

THEIR FURIOUS FOURTEENTH STUDIO ALBUM

FOREGONE

Combines The Aggressive, Metallic and
Melodic Strengths Of Their Landmark Records
with the Seasoned Songwriting of their
Postmodern Era

LIMITED EDITION DIGIPACK CD (INC BONUS TRACK)

CD | DOWNLOAD

LIMITED EDITION BLACK OR
WHITE/BLACK MARBLED VINYL

IN STORES FEB 10TH

AVAILABLE AT **hmv**

INCLUDES THE SINGLES
'STATE OF SLOW DECAY' & 'THE GREAT DECEIVER'

LIVE: BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL 2023

NEW WAVE AND GOTH COLLIDE ON THIS DEBUT ALBUM FROM NICK HOLMES AND GREG MACKINTOSH FROM PARADISE LOST

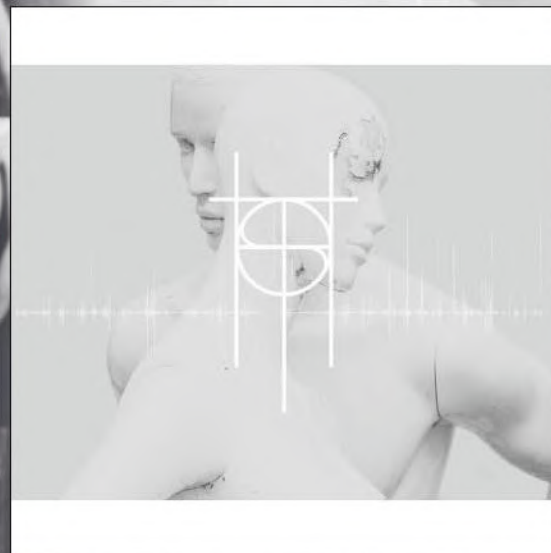


HOST - IX

LIMITED EDITION DIGIPACK CD (INC 3 BONUS TRACKS)
LIMITED EDITION WHITE VINYL | DOWNLOAD

IN STORES FEB 24TH

'HOST' HEIGHTENS AND EXPANDS ON THE PARADISE LOST RECORD OF THE SAME NAME



PRE-ORDER WITH AN EXCLUSIVE SIGNED
INSERT AT WWW.RECORDSTORE.CO.UK



@NUCLEARBLASTRECORDS
WWW.NUCLEARBLAST.DE



„REAL BOMBAST MEETS UNCOMPROMISING POWER METAL.“ - **Spark** (CZ)

KAMELOT

THE AWAKENING

OUT 17.03.

1-CD DIGIPAK | 2-LP GATEFOLD | 1-CD EARBOOK + 7INCH SINGLE | MUSIC CASSETTE | DIGITAL
LTD. BOX SET & VINYL EDIT. AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY VIA WWW.NAPALMRECORDS.COM

GENRE-FUSING SYMPHONIC METAL PIONEERS DELAIN ARE BACK!



ON TOUR 2023

21.04.23 UK - MANCHESTER / ACADEMY 2

22.04.23 UK - LONDON / O2 ISLINGTON ACADEMY

TICKETS: WWW.DELAIN.NL



DARK WATERS

OUT 10.02.

2-CD DIGISLEEVE | 2-LP GATEFOLD | DIGITAL

LTD. BOX AND EDITIONS AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY VIA WWW.NAPALMRECORDS.COM

XANDRIA

02.03.

THE WONDERS STILL AWAITING

1-CD JEWELCASE | 2-CD MEDIABOOK | 2-LP GATEFOLD MARBLED | DIGITAL

LTD. DELUXE BOX AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY VIA WWW.NAPALMRECORDS.COM



[/NAPALMRECORDS](#)
[/NAPALMRECORDS](#)

[/NAPALMRECORDSOFFICIAL](#)
[/NAPALMRECORDS](#)

visit our online store with music and merch
WWW.NAPALMRECORDS.COM

NAPALM
RECORDS